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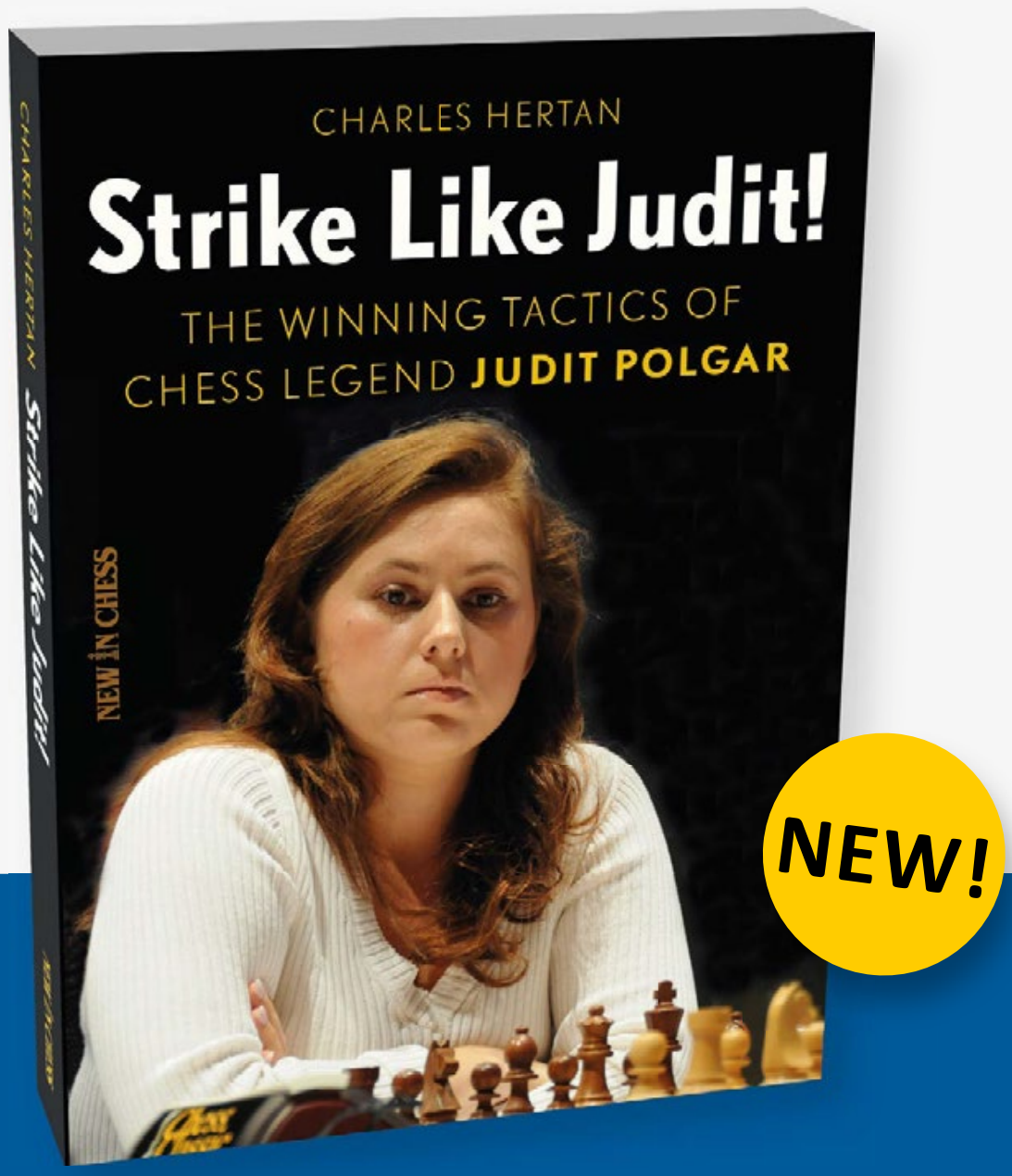

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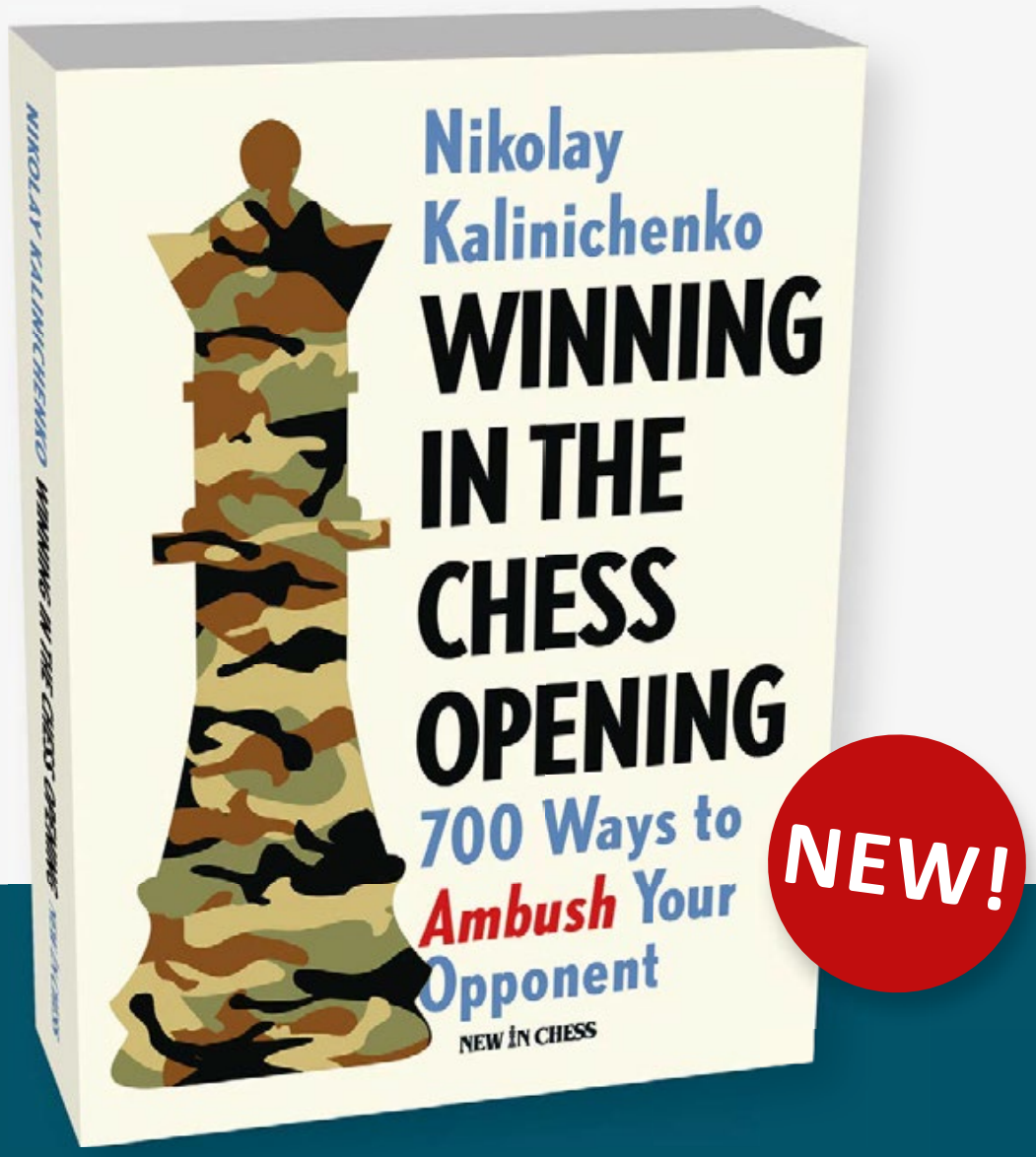

Everyone loves to win early in the opening. However you should never lose sight of the most important objective of your opening play: the proper development of your pawns and pieces. That is why this book is more than just an enjoyable collection of traps and tricks.

Nikolai Kalinichenko has collected 700 brilliant miniatures, topical games from a wide variety of players, from World Champions to amateurs. They are selected for their instructional value, and not merely to highlight blunders or accidents. In his notes Kalinichenko always explains the ideas and plans behind the opening and how play could have been improved.

Playing through these exciting games will teach you how to recognize opportunities to ambush your opponent in the first 20 moves. And, reversely, how to avoid such pitfalls in the opening. With the ideas presented in this well-organized book, the adventurous player will certainly win more games, and more rapidly!

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Exhilarated and Exhausted

Neal Preston is one of the most prolific and highly regarded rock photographers of all time. He's toured with some of the greatest rock bands in history, getting the kind of rare access that hard-core fans would almost kill for. He's a true insider; a shutterbug legend hailed with having 'a backstage pass to history'.

Preston has now published a near 50-year retrospective of his incredible work. His stunning new book, *Exhilarated and Exhausted*, is a veritable who's who of rock royalty with more than 300 iconic photographs of the stars he worked with, such as Led Zeppelin, The Who, Queen, Bruce Springsteen and many others. The book is already being acclaimed as one of music's most extensive and significant photography collections.

One shot is of Ray Charles in 1981 with his fabled braille chess set. Charles loved to play chess, and he never missed a chance to challenge a new opponent. 'The Genius' quickly threw the gauntlet down to Preston – and the photographer was only too happy to pick it up.

'Now I'm not Bobby Fischer, but I've been playing chess since I was a kid,' Preston recalls in the book. 'Yeah, I was a little distracted because I wanted to make sure I could shoot, but I was fairly certain I could beat Ray Charles, with all due respect to everyone out there. And he hammered me.' ■

NEAL PRESTON

RAY CHARLES

A brief history of his chess

When Stephen Hawking, the eminent physicist and author of *A Brief History of Time*, died on March 14, aged 76, in his home in Cambridge, England, many tributes were paid to his enormous contribution to cosmology. Here we'd like to remember his varied chess connections throughout his life.

Stephen Hawking playing chess with his son Tim. In the background his daughter Lucy.

In the 2014 movie of his life, *The Theory of Everything* – starring Eddie Redmayne in the Oscar-winning lead role – we discovered that as a student at Cambridge, chess-mad Hawking was so far ahead of his class and his tutor that he would often sneak chess books in to read during lectures.

And then there was the memorable occasion in late 2015, when Hawking took a futuristic chess variant mainstream after being challenged by Hollywood actor Paul Rudd to a game of Quantum Chess, that was narrated by Keanu Reeves. The video went viral on its release, and at last count had received over 5.5 million views on YouTube.

For Hawking, chess was also a game that allowed him to bond with his son, Tim. Last year, in a BBC documentary on the occasion of Hawking's 75th birthday, Tim revealed that he and his famous physicist father were fiercely competitive over-the-board. 'There was no compassion at all,' he shared. 'My father is hugely competitive, and he certainly wasn't the easiest opponent at any game, particularly chess.'

Strategic games

In past editions, we've covered the chess-playing skills of some of the top sporting stars of the MLB (baseball) and NFL (football). And now the NBA is getting in on the act, with a recent feature appearing in *The Arizona Republic* newspaper revealing that the Phoenix Suns' Josh Jackson uses his chess skills to help get him an advantage on the basketball court.

On the court Jackson is a whirlwind of aggressiveness and emotion, but before each NBA game it's a more thoughtful and reflective Jackson who chills out by playing chess. Jackson says he's been playing chess since he was a child, and he firmly believes that chess and basketball aren't entirely dissimilar.

He was captivated by chess at the age of nine or ten after seeing his stepfather playing and he soon fell in love with the game. At school he continued to pursue his fascination with chess by starting his elementary school's chess club.

Now, Jackson takes a small chess board on every Suns road trip. The differences between chess and basketball are obvious, but it's the similarities that attract Jackson. Both pursuits require studying the opponent, trying to figure out his next move and then reacting. One response is physical, one mental, but the process is the same. 'Both are strategic games,' Jackson says, 'And you need a strategy in any game you play, to be honest. Especially basketball.'

The more thoughtful and reflective Josh Jackson, figuring out his next move.

March Madness

And can we be surprised that chess plays a role in college basketball as well? The NCAA men's basketball phenomena of 'March Madness' in the USA all evolves around what's become known as 'The Science of Bracketology' or predicting the knockout winners, as 64 teams become 32, that in turn becomes the 'Sweet Sixteen', 'Elite 8', and then the 'Final Four' that decides the eventual winner.

The UMBC basketball team celebrated one of the biggest upsets in college sports. Inspired by their chess team!

The perennial No.1 seeds and multi-time winners is the University of Virginia. Only this March, in the Sweet Sixteen stage, in what's been described as one of the biggest upsets ever in college sports, Virginia were sensationally knocked out by huge underdogs University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC), the No. 16 seeds. Then, in the postgame interviews, the biggest surprise of all for the media came when they discovered that the UMBC's inspiration for their headlining success was their very own chess team.

The UMBC is credited with creating the idea of a high-powered collegiate chess program. Its program director, Dr. Alan T. Sherman, a professor

of computer science and electrical, started building the program from scratch in the early 1990s. Other colleges followed their model, including Webster University. This year UMBC reached the Chess Final Four and is still a powerhouse, but the team isn't as dominant as it once was.

Still, after the biggest college basketball upset of all time, the players praised their chess team. 'Don't forget about them, either. They're still big', UMBC centre Nolan Gerrity said in a widely viewed video, 'They paved the way. We looked up to them.'

The Real thing

Remember when in December 2013, Magnus Carlsen received the VIP treatment at Real Madrid's Bernabéu stadium? As guest of honour for Real's league match with Real Valladolid, Carlsen was presented with a shirt with his name on it, was introduced to the crowd, got to meet the stars, and then performed the honorary kick off.

And what's good enough for Magnus is also good enough for Ukrainian GM Anna Muzychuk! Recently, she also received the VIP treatment at the Bernabéu before Real's fixture with Deportivo Alaves. She also swapped shirts with star striker Cristiano Ronaldo and got to meet winger Gareth Bale. On Ronaldo's Facebook page, Anna wrote (as you do on a multi-time Golden Ball winner's social media page!): 'Exchange t-shirts with Cristiano Ronaldo was particularly memorable.'

No offence meant, but it looks like Anna is up an exchange.

Hey Jude

It's not often that a chess player is endorsed by an internationally-renowned guide, but *Fodor's Travel Guide* series now recommends that, when visiting New Orleans, all chess lovers should check out Jude Acers, one of the game's greatest promoters and characters.

Jude Acers, 'The Man in the Red Beret'.

For the last 40 years, the irrepressible Acers, with his trademark red beret, has taken on all comers for $5 a time at his sidewalk gazebo fabled 'World Chess Table' on Decatur Street in the French Quarter.

A national master at 17, Acers played Bobby Fischer and Walter Browne – and his National Open draw against Browne was voted a 'Top Ten' theory game in the world in 1970 in *Chess Informant*.

For many years, Acers topped the U.S. Chess Federation's most-active list, and during his many and often wondrous national chess tours the consummate showman has staged countless simultaneous and blindfold exhibitions to promote the game, even earning an entry in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for a then-record 179-opponent simul on Long Island in July 1976.

All of which is an apt moment to reveal that the life and times of Jude Acers – who barely survived Hurricane Katrina – is also the subject of a new Kickstarter-funded local documentary, 'The Man in the Red Beret', that is currently being produced by New Orleans-based K&D Video and expected to be released early next year.

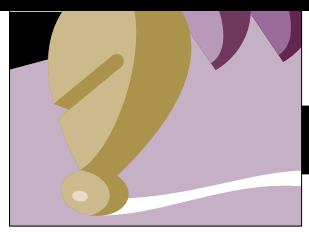
The Coldest Game

What does a washed-up chess master do instead of chess? The answer, as we discovered from the latest edition of the movie and showbiz magazine *Variety*, is to try your hand at the espionage game. At least that's the premise of the upcoming new spy thriller, *The Coldest Game*, directed by Lukasz Kosmicki and starring Bill Pullman.

In the film, Pullman's character Joshua Mansky – described as a complex man who resents authority, lacks social skills and lives mainly inside his own head – is recruited by a seductive CIA agent (played by Lotte Verbeek) and abruptly flown to Warsaw to face off against a Russian chess champ (Evgenij Sydikhin) at an international tournament in the iconic Palace of Culture and Science in the city centre of the Polish capital.

The match turns out to be a sort of proxy for the Cuban missile crisis in the film. In one scene featuring a phone call from President John F. Kennedy, Pullman's Mansky finds himself reluctantly saddled with intelligence duties as he preps for the next chess match, bristling: 'I knew it's not about the chess.' ■

Director Lukasz Kosmicki and Bill Pullman on the set of The Coldest Game.



Your Move

An elderly man

Thank you for mentioning Ortvin Sarapu in your Infographic 'The Kings of Their Countries' in New In Chess 2018/1.

One day in early 1999, I happened to visit the famous Mission Bay Beach in Auckland, New Zealand. I saw half a dozen tables on the beach where people were playing chess! An elderly man was sitting alone in the first board. I naturally went to play with him.

I was new in New Zealand and had no idea who the elderly man was. I might have played 8 or 10 blitz games with him and to my surprise he won more games than I did! I blamed my poor performance on the past 15 years or so that I hadn't played any chess.

A few weeks later, I saw the photograph of the elderly man in *The New Zealand Herald*, he had just passed away. Only then did I come to know that he was IM Ortvin Sarapu, the 'Mr Chess' of New Zealand! I also understood why nobody else dared to play him when I did.

Uday Bajracharya
Sydney, Australia

Jonathan Penrose

I would just like to point out one small error on the 'Kings of their Countries' page in New In Chess 2018/1. Jonathan Penrose, ten times British champion, did not give up over-the-board play in 1970, as stated, but continued to compete in British Championships, county and club matches, over the next decade.

Nevertheless 1970 did have some significance, as in this year Penrose twice fainted at the board. The cause was later diagnosed as hypoglycaemia, low blood sugar, exacerbated by stress. After these episodes I think he put less mental effort into his play and he never won the British Championship again.

As it happens, I was one of his last over-the-board opponents, since I played him in the London League near the end of 1979. After shaking hands at the end of an uneventful 17-move draw, Jonathan got up from his chair, put on his coat and, patting his heavy-laden briefcase, told me that he now had work to do! He never had any desire whatsoever to become a professional chess player and, having obtained a PhD in Psychology, took his career as a university lecturer very seriously.

I visited Jonathan several times in the late 1990s and he told me he had in fact made a New Year's resolution on January 1st 1980 that he would not play over-the-board competitive chess again, but would instead pursue correspondence chess, at which he soon became the highest rated player in the world.

He only broke his resolution once, in 1984, when he lost a match game for Hampstead, his long term club. However, in the 1990s he declined Joop van Oosterom's invitation to play in a Women vs. Veterans match-tournament in London.

With the proliferation of chess engines in the early 1990s, he subsequently also gave up correspondence play. At that time he did not even own a computer!

Jonathan Penrose was awarded the grandmaster title retrospectively in 1993 but no one ever doubted his playing strength. At the Leipzig Olympiad in 1960 he scored 2½ points against three World Champions. He defeated Mikhail Tal and Max Euwe and agreed a draw against Bobby Fischer in a won position, due to severe time pressure. And at that time he wasn't even an IM!

Jimmy Adams
Hoddesdon, UK

P.S. On another topic, may I invite any readers of *Gyula Breyer: The Chess Revolutionary*, published by New In Chess, to Google 'Kingpin Breyer' where they will find a link to a four part article containing further interesting material not included in my book.

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A bit too much

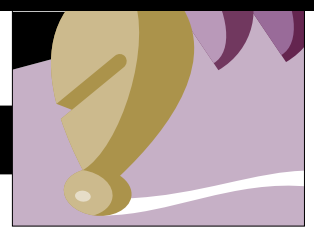
In New In Chess 2018/2, GM Nigel Short concludes that correspondence chess has lost purpose. I would like to point out that I believe many of the top OTB players would not agree with him – correspondence chess games serve as one of the most valuable resources for opening research and fresh ideas. Examples of that can be found in many games. Let me just mention the most recent and rather popular one, where in the game Aronian-Kramnik, Candidates 2018, Round 3, Black came up with the surprise move 7...♖g8, and went on to win the game. Kramnik himself said in an interview after the game that 'a couple of years ago he found this very strong resource', while some chess portals indicated that move was 'played once before in a correspondence game'. The truth is that the move was first played on November 20th, 2012, by the late CC IM Kopeikin, as every correspondence player could know by simply looking at his database. After that, the move has been played at least in four more CC games.

While we CC players have gotten rather used to the fact of being ignored and not credited for our achievements, it is a bit too much to call the whole discipline to be without purpose. As many OTB GMs on my mailing list would confirm, I'm sure.

Leonardo Ljubičić
ICCF Marketing Director

Running the extra mile

I'd like to react to Nigel Short's column about correspondence chess in New In Chess 2018/2. And let me begin by saying that I appreciate him as a chess player and a writer. My name is Tiziano Mosconi, a lousy OTB Candidate Master and two-times Italian Correspondence Champion. While I'm certainly far less experienced than you



regarding tournament chess, I think I can expand your knowledge of the correspondence world. How could you judge it with practically no experience? Do you believe that a powerful computer is enough to win correspondence tournaments?

Why don't you give it a try? Believe me, you won't go far. Of course, armed with all the best tools (opening books, all the top engines, tablebases etc) you could draw most of your games but at the top level you will also lose a fair share of them. I've made a living of taking the game to positions that engines misjudge, and even if incrementally difficult to do, we are far from the day when this will no longer be possible.

This is often underestimated by over-the-board players, because their games are usually decided by short-term tactics that computers are able to find in a few seconds, so they believe that with enough power and time, the engines will be able to find everything. In correspondence chess it's not like this. When you heavily misjudge a position, a material imbalance, a pawn storm, a long term pin, a fortress, then no increase in calculating power can save you.

If my words can't convince you, I hope my results will. I've won 49 of the 78 games I've played till now, and I believe most of my opponents used the best IT tools they could put their hands on. And, brace yourself, my computer is a tremendous 9-year-old PC with two cores, practically a dinosaur, plus a mediocre 5-year-old laptop. Correspondence chess has undoubtedly changed in the past ten or twenty years, but I don't believe the time has come to pronounce it dead. Chess is a mix of sport, science and art, and the different time controls highlight these components. Bullet chess is all about instinct and speed; blitz is about selectivity and initiative; tournament chess requires stamina, knowledge, memory, calculation and many other qualities; correspondence chess is scientific in that it requires precise organization of work, but is also artistic if you try to find unconventional plans.

Let me make a final comparison to running. There are many running distances, from 100 metres to the marathon. The sprinter has very different qualities from the middle distance and marathon runner. But nobody would say that the latter is not a real runner, because he's a terrible sprinter. Enjoy the sprint and the middle distance, Mr. Short, but please respect those who want to run the extra mile.

Tiziano Mosconi
Italy

Deeply disappointed

I was sincerely surprised and deeply disappointed to see that in New In Chess 2018/2 you published Nigel Short's article with the provocative title 'Obsolescence '. If the purpose was to offend the entire correspondence chess community, then you brilliantly succeeded in this.

If somebody does not understand a particular type of human activity, but presents his point of view publicly, it is the responsibility of the editors to recognize this (unless they themselves share the presented point of view).

One thing that Nigel Short fails to recognize is that correspondence chess is first of all a research laboratory for chess. Without it many brilliant ideas (such as the recent novelty in the Aronian-Kramnik game) may never see the light of day. The argument that correspondence chess is drawish, because the human 'blunder' factor is virtually eliminated from the game, is complete nonsense. It is similar to saying that scientists should not use computers in their research, because that undermines their achievements. Chess may be purely a sport for some people, but it is also art and science for others.

Kirill Oseledets,
Chicago, IL, USA

Editorial postscript:

Needless to say, we do not necessarily share Nigel Short's views or opinions. As a columnist he is free to express them in our pages. Just as our readers are free to vent their agreement or disagreement. We aim to be an open platform where there is room for differing views.

It is also tempting at this point to refer you to GM Erwin l'Ami's new column in our *Yearbook*, in which he presents interesting opening ideas from the world of correspondence chess. Here's a quote from his first column in *Yearbook* 126: 'Google's Alpha Zero may have destroyed Stockfish, but it wouldn't stand a chance against the best correspondence players out there.'

Socrates or Plato

According to Saravanan (New In Chess 2018/2), Vidit says he found it difficult to read Homer ('Tough!'), Aristotle and Socrates ('Too tough!!'). Reading Socrates isn't just tough – it's impossible. He wrote nothing. Our knowledge of Socrates comes mainly from Plato, but we have no idea how accurate Plato's version is.

Chris Holmes
St. Maur des Fossés, France

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The Shrinking World Championship Purse

When Magnus Carlsen faces Fabiano Caruana in London in November in a match for the World Championship, the two players will be fighting for the lion's share of a prize fund of one million euros, or about $1.25 million at the current exchange rate. That is a sizable payday for professional chess players, who often earn far less than that.

But, as the chart below illustrates, it is significantly less than the prize funds of some previous matches.

One reason for the smaller purses is that organizational costs are clearly very high. World Chess, the commercial partner of the World Chess Federation, or FIDE, which is now organizing the matches, is staging them in cities that are quite expensive (London in 2018 and New York City in 2016).

Still, title matches have been held in those cities before, and with bigger prize funds, so other factors are likely in play.

DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN

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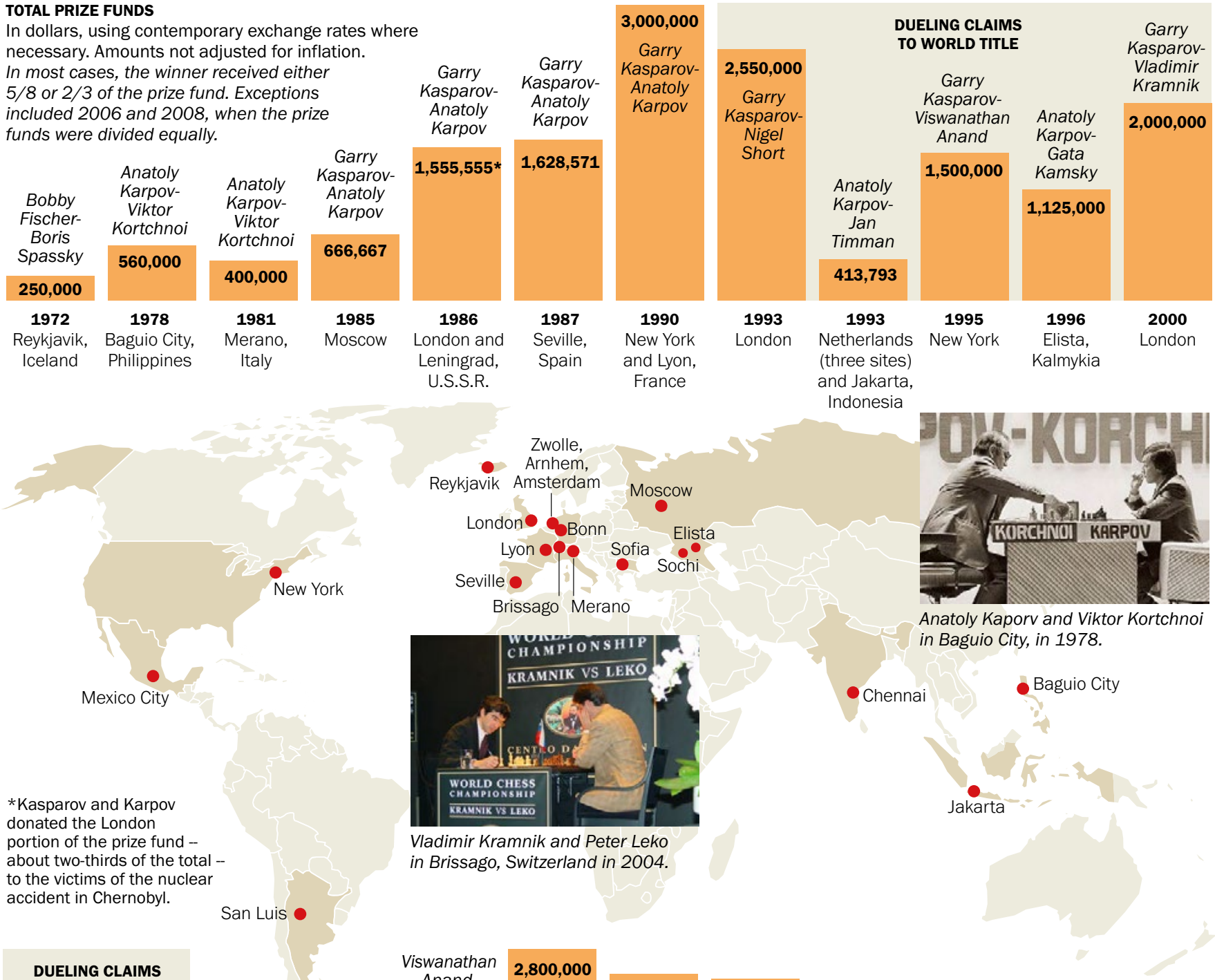
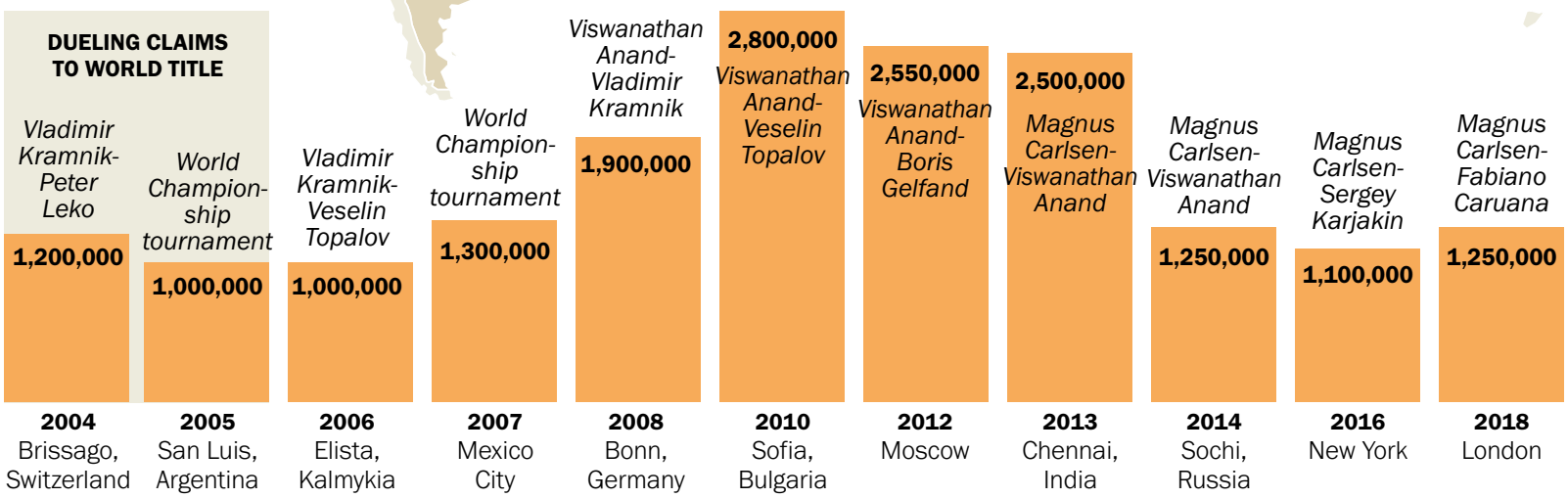
In dollars, using contemporary exchange rates where necessary. Amounts not adjusted for inflation.
In most cases, the winner received either 5/8 or 2/3 of the prize fund. Exceptions included 2006 and 2008, when the prize funds were divided equally.



Anatoly Kaporv and Viktor Kortchnoi in Baguio City, in 1978.

Vladimir Kramnik and Peter Leko in Brissago, Switzerland in 2004.

*Kasparov and Karpov donated the London portion of the prize fund -- about two-thirds of the total -- to the victims of the nuclear accident in Chernobyl.



Fair & Square

Holger Czukay: 'The bass player's like a king in chess. He doesn't move much, but when he does he changes everything.' *(The founding member and bassist with early 1970s Cologne-based band Can, who died last year aged 79)*

Quini: 'It wasn't that uncomfortable, if you knew how to move into the right position. One day they brought me down a copy of Marca so that I could see the football results and in the end they gave me a television and everything. And a chess set. I played on my own, but I like playing on my own.' *(The Spain and Barcelona striker Quini, who died recently aged 68, on being kidnapped for 25 days in March 1981. He forgave his kidnappers, who were unemployed and desperate for money to support their families)*

Alexander Yakovenko: 'It is a big game of chess that we will play. All this information campaign will fizzle out sooner or later because there is nothing to fuel it – there is not a single fact and no information is being revealed.'
(The Russian Ambassador to the UK, on the tit-for-tat political fallout between the two nations following the recent nerve agent attack on a former Russian spy in Salisbury)

Vladimir Kramnik: 'I would prefer chess in museums with lots of spectators and some noise than somewhere else where there are no spectators and absolute quiet.' *(Commenting on playing in the recent Tal Memorial, with the spectacular backdrop of the playing hall being the Russian Museum of Impressionism)*

Michael Birch OBE: 'When I was a kid, I really liked playing chess, which is pretty geeky; I just enjoyed it – thinking, exercising my mind. And I found computers to be like an eight-hour day chess game.'
(The computer entrepreneur and Bebo tycoon)

Vladimir Nabokov: 'Of all my Russian books, *The Defence* contains and diffuses the greatest "warmth", which may seem odd seeing how supremely abstract Chess is supposed to be.'

Michael Chabon: 'A friendship across sectarian lines is not a common phenomenon, in his experience. In the past, it has struck him that, apart from homosexuals, only chess players have found a reliable way to bridge, intensely but without fatal violence, the gulf that separates any given pair of men.'
(The American novelist and short story writer, in his 2008 Hugo Award-winning novel The Yiddish Policeman's Union)

Magnus Carlsen: 'My philosophy is that if you get together with friends, colleagues to eat good food, enjoy life, train well and sit down at the board to try to find new ideas, then you will find them.' *(As the Berlin Candidates got underway to find his next challenger, the World Champion headed to a training camp in Oman with this message)*

Garry Kasparov: 'Losing can persuade you to change what doesn't need to be changed, and winning can convince you everything is fine even if you are on the brink of disaster.'

C.E. Tobisman: 'Chess was a gentleman's game – every bit as nasty as a bar brawl, only infinitely more deliberate.'
(The American author and comic book writer, in her novel Doubt, the first in the series of her Caroline Auden legal thrillers)

Amar Bose: 'No one ever won a chess game by betting on each move. Sometimes you have to move backwards to get a step forward.'
(The American engineer and founding chairman of Bose Corporation, 1929-2013)

Neil deGrasse Tyson: 'Chess in the Schools works because chess is a metaphor for life.' *(The chess-loving American astrophysicist, author, and science communicator)*

Jennifer Shahade: 'I love chess, but it's the height of decadence.'
(Quoted in Paul Hoffman's 2007 book, The King's Gambit)

BERLIN

Fabiano Caruana prevails in sizzling Candidates to challenge Magnus Carlsen

Goodbye to Berlin

LENNART OOTES

Expectations were high, seemingly too high, but the FIDE Candidates tournament in Berlin brought more drama, hypnotizing clashes and permanently shifting story lines than any pundit could have foreseen. At the Kühlhaus – a derelict industrial structure turned into a cavernous free-fight theatre – the heat was on from move one. Vladimir Kramnik went on the rampage, lavishly mixing beauty and blunders. Top favourite Levon Aronian collapsed completely in the most tragic implosion of his career. With one round to go, four players could still win. And then Fabiano Caruana stood erect, kept his cool and became the first American Challenger since Bobby Fischer in the unified World Championship. DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM reports from the German capital.

For those who had been at the Candidates tournament in Moscow two years ago, the venue of the Berlin Candidates felt sort of familiar. In Moscow, the old and deserted Telegraph building at a stone's throw from Red Square had been cleverly redecorated with the black and white house style of World Chess (formerly Agon). Although the environment felt rather naked and barren to some visitors, it certainly worked well in pictures. In Berlin, the old Kühlhaus, built in the early 19th century and at the time Europe's biggest cold storage unit, felt even more derelict and desolate, but here, too, the black and white of World Chess felt in sync with what you see in many modern artists' plans for abandoned factories and other industrial structures. And once you were inside, it didn't take that long to get used to the dark spaces interspersed with spot-lit areas where the only colour you saw were strips warning the visitors where they might trip and fall or ruin their clothing against the rough concrete walls.

World Chess has clearly gone for a contemporary way to present their events, and this is a laudable ambition. Not everyone will have been taken by the overall set-up, but few will forget how, hanging on the railings on the second and third floors, they stared down at the players on the first floor as if they were watching an illegal cock fight or a shady free fight.

On the first floor, in the playing area, the spectators could walk around the four cubicles in which the eight Candidates were playing, but if they wanted to sit down for a moment, they had to move up to the fourth floor. Here there was a big space where they could follow the German live commentary, have a drink and watch the post-game press conferences. The fifth floor was off-limits for chess fans, unless they forked out a sizable amount of euros to buy access to the VIP-room with free drinks and the international live stream with Judit Polgar.

Message in a bottle

Attractive as all this may sound, the old Kühlhaus also posed logistical challenges that the organizers had insufficiently prepared for. Only hours before the start of the first round, workmen were still hammering away, but for some problems it was hard to find a solution. There were far too few toilets in the building, and the players had to make do with one toilet that had no water the first few days. In one of his many hilarious deadpan comments at the press conferences, Alexander Grischuk recounted how he had rushed to the toilet in time-trouble, only to find it occupied. Five minutes later he tried again, and when he reached for the door, 'some random person' came out, making it clear to him that their only toilet was not even their exclusive right. Even more embarrassing for the organizers was Grischuk's reaction to a question at another press conference where he was asked what he was carrying in the plastic bag he had with him. He shrugged his shoulders, picked up the bag and showed a big water bottle that was almost half filled with urine.

'When he reached for the door, "some random person" came out, making it clear to him that their only toilet was not even their exclusive right.'

For journalists, the conditions also left a thing or two to be desired, because the press room was cramped and quite Spartan. And it was only after an emphatic request on the second day by a German journalist that (instant) coffee, tea and water were provided.

Exclusive coverage

Even more painful was the struggle with the live broadcast. As most of the spectators are obviously sitting at home (and interest in the Candidates was huge), World Chess puts great emphasis on the Internet broadcast, and they claim that they provide a unique viewing experience that is worth the money they are charging. In fact, World Chess CEO Ilya Merenzon has not yet given up on the idea of providing exclusive coverage, blocking other chess sites, as part of a commercial plan to make their events profitable. If you look at other sports, this is not an illusory ambition, as many chess fans, spoiled by free broadcasts, often say, but of course it didn't help that once again a lot went wrong with the official broadcast. The most painful moment must have been when in the early rounds it proved impossible to show all four boards simultaneously and the following message appeared on the screen: 'While we work on resolving the issue with the moves broadcast, please follow the games live at chessbase.com, chessbomb.com, chess.com, lichess.org or your favorite app.' Ouch.

Merenzon endured the setbacks with his usual outward equanimity, saying they will keep trying to improve and continue to be ready to learn. It's this quiet friendliness that often endears him to the players and the people he works with, but as long as so many stitches are dropped during each event, it probably just as often drives them to despair.

A celebration of chess

However, amid all these headaches and glitches, Merenzon held one huge trump: the Berlin Candidates was an unforgettable slugfest with great fights

in each and every round, and seemingly endless excitement. A celebration of chess at its best, and regardless of whether you were watching at home or had the privilege of being in Berlin, you didn't want to miss a moment. Not a day went by without one or more games that left the experts and fans shaking their heads in disbelief and admiration.

Anyone who had witnessed the first Candidates tournament of 'the new era', in London in 2013, where Magnus Carlsen edged out Vladimir Kramnik in a gripping finale, must have felt that this was a unique moment in chess history (which of course it was), but by now we know that the Candidates has become a competition *sui generis* where great chess and permanent excitement are guaranteed. And Berlin was no exception.

Finding an explanation for the uninhibited mayhem that we witnessed may not be that easy. Some suggested that setting the scene in the Kühlhaus was a smart decision, because it provided the kind of rough and unpolished backdrop reminiscent of futuristic action movies in non-descript societies after Earth has been struck by some disaster. Others rightly pointed at the fact that so much is at stake at this last hurdle before the World Championship match. But then, playing it safe, first and foremost avoiding defeat and looking for your chances in a handful of games, would be a more sensible approach, wouldn't it?

Or maybe the players were simply motivated to give it their all. This was undeniably the case with Vladimir Kramnik, who lost no time to show his intentions. In the first round, he defeated Grischuk and, following a draw with his other compatriot Sergey Karjakin in the second round (as there were more than one Russian and American participant, they were paired against each other as early as possible to avoid any suspicions), he played a game for the ages in Round 3 against Levon Aronian.

Entering this building might substantially increase your IQ.
Chess does that to humans.
March, 10—28 Kühlhaus
FIDE World Chess
Candidates Tournament
Berlin · 2018

LENNART OOTES

Anyone entering the Kühlhaus to watch the Berlin Candidates tournament was warned that he or she did so at their own peril.

Levon Aronian
Vladimir Kramnik
Berlin 2018 (3)
Ruy Lopez, Berlin Defence

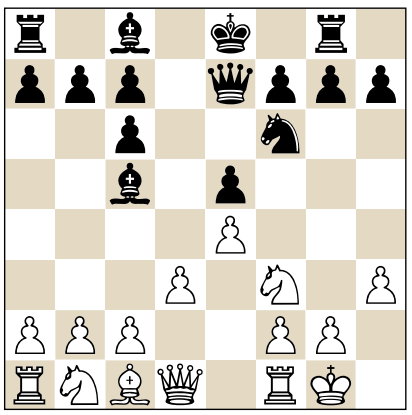
1.e4 Aronian hardly ever plays 1.e4. In an old interview on Sergey Shipov's website, he once said that he never plays 1.e4, because he wants to have something new to play when he becomes an old-age pensioner.

1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.♗xc6 dxc6 6.0-0

6.♘bd2 is more common, when White keeps the option of going 0-0-0.

6...♕e7 7.h3? 7.♘bd2 is the main move, and now 7...♗g4 8.h3 ♗h5, followed by ...♘d7, and if needed (after ...f7-f6), the bishop can get back into the game via f7.

7...♖g8!



A novelty for OTB practice, but it had already been played in four correspondence games. Black brutally threatens ...g5! (♗xg5 ♗xh3! gxh3 h6).

8.♔h1

Played rather quickly. Aronian probably wanted to keep Kramnik guessing about whether he was still in his preparation. At the same time, this is a natural move, stopping ...g5. The alternative was 8.♘bd2.

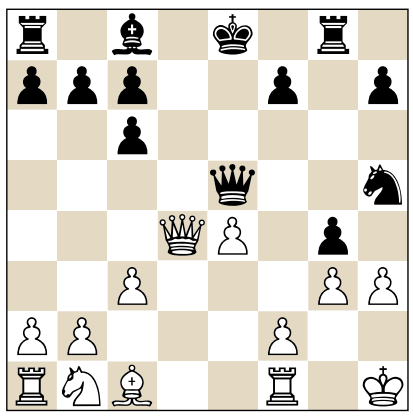
8...♘h5!? This is a new move. Two correspondence games saw 8...h6.

9.c3? This move will only harm White's position. It takes away the c3-square from the knight and weakens the d3-square.

9.♘c3! would lead to a better version of the game, when after 9...g5 10.♘xe5 g4 11.d4 ♗d6 12.g3 ♗xe5 13.dxe5 ♕xe5 14.h4 ♗d7 Black will castle queenside and enjoy a comfortable game.

9...g5! 10.♘xe5 g4! The key move.

11.d4 ♗d6 12.g3 ♗xe5 13.dxe5 ♕xe5 14.♕d4



LENNART OOTES

Vladimir Kramnik's brilliant win in Round 3 was a brutal blow for top favourite Levon Aronian. This photo is from their second encounter, that the Armenian also lost.

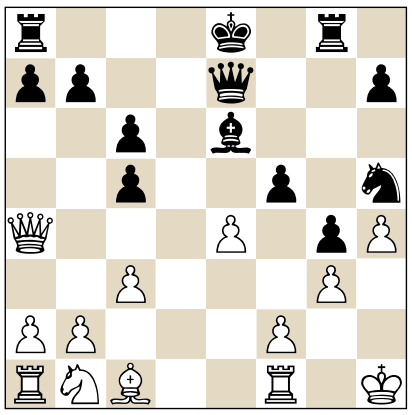
14...♕e7?! Objectively stronger was 14...♕xd4 15.cxd4 gxh3 16.♔h2 ♗e6 17.♘c3 0-0-0 18.♗e3 f5 19.exf5 ♗xf5, when Black has an extra pawn. The opposite-coloured bishops give White some hope, but with the knights still on the board, his defensive task is pretty difficult. The extra pawn on h3 is much more annoying than it is weak.

15.h4 Not the only move. After 15.♗e3!? gxh3 16.♘d2 White has a very dangerous position, but here he is finally developed and ready to look for chances.

15...c5 16.♕c4? 16.♕d3 would have kept White very much in the game: 16...♗d7 17.c4 0-0-0 18.♘c3 ♖ge8 19.♖e1 ♗c6 20.♘d5, and Black is likely to win a pawn using the pins (...♕e5 f5 or ...♗xd5 cxd5 ♘f6), but the game is far from over.

16...♗e6 17.♕b5+ c6 18.♕a4? This loses on the spot. The only way to keep the game going was 18.♕d3 ♖d8 19.♕e3, as ...f5 is prevented.

18...f5!



Now 19.exf5 is impossible, and ...f5-f4 will come with devastating effect.

19.♗g5 After 19.exf5 ♘xg3+! is the point: 20.fxg3 ♗d5+ 21.♔g1 ♕e2 22.♖f2 ♕e1+, followed by mate.

19...♖xg5 20.hxg5 Now everything wins, but Kramnik finishes the game in style. **20...f4 21.♕d1 ♖d8 22.♕c1 fxg3 23.♘a3 ♖d3 24.♖d1 ♗d5! 25.f3 gxf3 26.exd5 ♕e2 27.♖e1 g2+** White resigned.

Drama

There were still 11 rounds to go, but this game made such an impression that many showed no doubt and claimed that this was already 'the game of the tournament'. It probably was, but there was much more to come.

Kramnik continued to play with abandon. He also reached a winning position against Fabiano Caruana in Round 4, but when that game took a dramatic turn and he lost, his tournament took a dramatic turn as well. By Round 9, Kramnik had lost three more games, and his chances to write history had virtually been reduced to zero. With admirable courage, the former World Champion fought on and definitely contributed heavily to the entertainment, not in the least because of his permanent optimistic views of his own chances in the post-game press conferences. Even the normally reticent Ding Liren started shaking his head and smilingly begged to disagree when Kramnik assessed his chances in their game too favourably.

For Aronian, the Berlin Candidates will always remain a painful wound. Following his magnificent results in the past year, the Armenian was seen as the number one favourite. Earlier disasters at Candidates tournaments would be forgotten; this was his moment. It was not to be, the Candidates curse continued. Sadly, Aronian was only a shadow of the superb player who won almost everything there was to be won before he arrived in Berlin, the city where he had lived for many years. In Round 4, Aronian seemed to recover from his loss to Kramnik with a win against Karjakin, but that was the last game he won; five more defeats followed. The pain was shared by the local fans who welcomed him with an extra warm applause at every press conference.

The deserved winner

In a Candidates tournament there is only one winner and, cruelly, it doesn't matter too much where you finish if you don't win. In Berlin, the winner was Fabiano Caruana, a deserved winner, who played strong and confident chess and was ready to fight back after losing a game at a very unpleasant moment. His main rivals were Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, who was in contention all through the event, and Sergey Karjakin, who made an impressive comeback and climbed back to the top after a disastrous start.

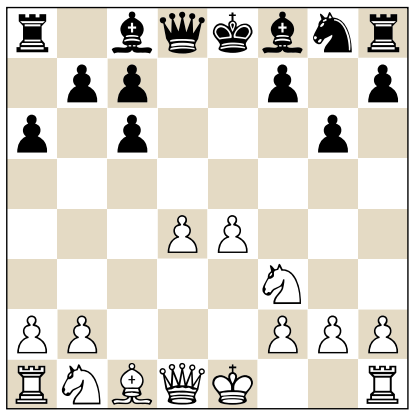
The fight for first place remained unclear till the very end, with Alexander Grischuk and Ding Liren also having good reason to keep up their hopes. Describing all the twists and turns, even only in the final rounds, would require many pages, so we will let a selection of great games do the further talking. More thoughts about the tournament and observations about the competitors can be found in the interview with Fabiano Caruana starting on page 44.

The first game we look at was played in Round 1. Sergey Karjakin, the winner of the 2016 Candidates tournament, could not have had a worse start. Obviously, top-seed Shakhriyar Mamedyarov had no reasons to complain.

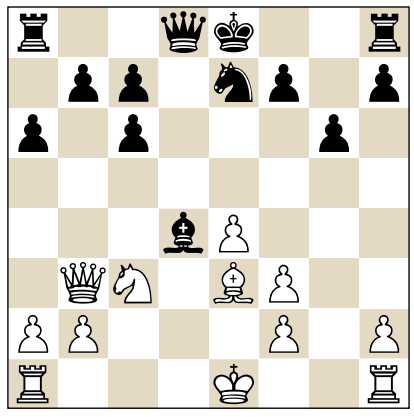
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Sergey Karjakin
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Berlin 2018 (1)
Ruy Lopez, Smyslov Variation

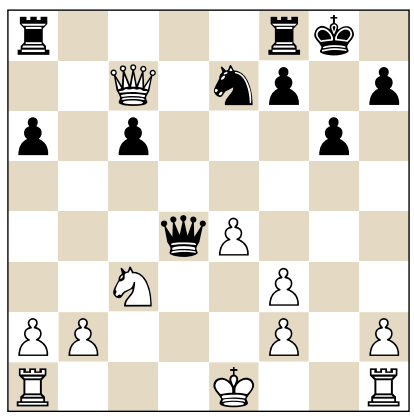
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 g6
The g6 Spanish is rather offbeat, but unlike its reputation, it is not a risky opening. Its only problem is that pretty much whatever variation White chooses, Black will have very few winning chances.
4.c3 a6 5.♗xc6 dxc6 6.d4
This system was reintroduced at top level by Naiditsch.
6...exd4 7.cxd4



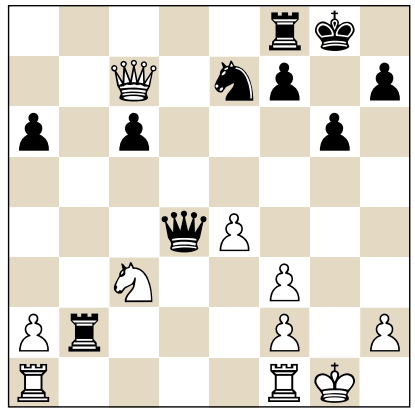
7...♗g4!?
After 7...♗g7 8.♘c3 ♘e7 9.h3 0-0 10.0-0 h6 11.♗f4 g5 12.♗e5 ♘g6 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.d5, White got some risk-free pressure in Naiditsch-Stevic, Croatia 2014 (1-0, 40).
8.♕b3
There are plenty of interesting options to consider, but this is forcing the capture on f3, clarifying the situation.
8...♗xf3 9.gxf3 ♗g7 10.♗e3 ♘e7 11.♘c3 ♗xd4



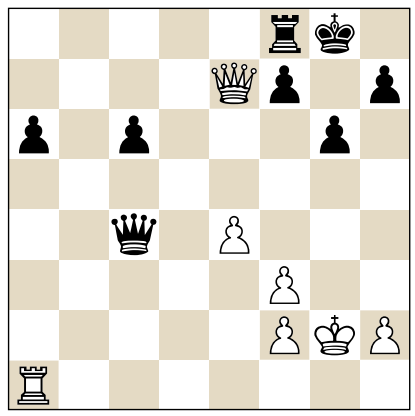
12.♗xd4?!
There were many good options, but this is not one of them. It just doesn't work, because two moves later Black will not be forced to waste a tempo protecting the e7-knight.
12.0-0-0 is interesting and needs further investigation.
Most natural is probably 12.♖d1, when after 12...c5 13.♕xb7 0-0 14.♘e2 Black would have to show that he had done his homework here.
12.♕xb7 is a third alternative.
12...♕xd4 13.♕xb7 0-0 14.♕xc7
It was a bit naive to expect that Black would have to defend his e7-knight here. With the white king stuck in the centre, Black has more than one good option.



14...♖ab8
14...♘d5!? forces massive simplifications: 15.♘xd5 (15.exd5 ♕d3! is dangerous for White) 15...cxd5 16.♕c3 ♕xc3+ 17.bxc3 ♖fe8, and I cannot imagine any other result than a draw here.
15.0-0
After 15.♕xe7 ♖xb2 White has to castle anyway, because 16.♘d1? ♖c2 17.♖b1 ♕d3 wins for Black.
15...♖xb2

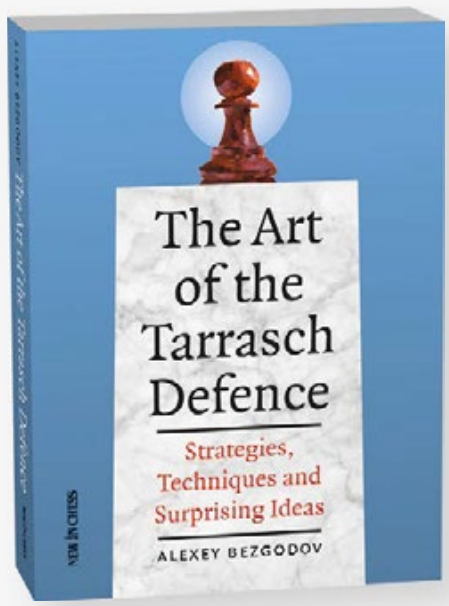


16.♕xe7
Karjakin decided to shut the game down, but in hindsight it might have been easier to keep the knights on the board. The knight on e7 doesn't strike me as one you need to be afraid of.
After 16.♘d1! ♖b5 17.♘e3 I don't think White is any worse. Again, the e7-knight is actually pretty awkward, and the natural ...♕e5 leads to further simplifications.
16...♕xc3 17.♔g2 ♖c2 18.♖ad1
18.h4!? was a decent move to begin with.
18...♖xa2 19.♖c1 ♖c2 20.♖xc2 ♕xc2 21.♖a1 ♕c4
Black is a pawn up for now, but White can clearly win back the pawn at any moment.



22.♕b7?!
It was cleaner to play for some 'domination' with 22.h4!? and at the very least cover the g5-square first, before going for the sacrificed pawn.
22...♕b5 23.♕xa6 ♕g5+ 24.♔f1 ♕f6 25.♔g2 ♖b8
Black of course keeps the game going, since he is running no risk. A precise move was required here.

For those who like to play aggressively with Black



The Tarrasch Defence is one of the most ambitious ways to play against 1.d4. Black immediately fights for the centre, gets a lot of space and develops his pieces without many problems.

Former Russian Champion Alexey Bezgodov has created a deeply researched journey into the positional structures and the key moments in the fight for the initiative.

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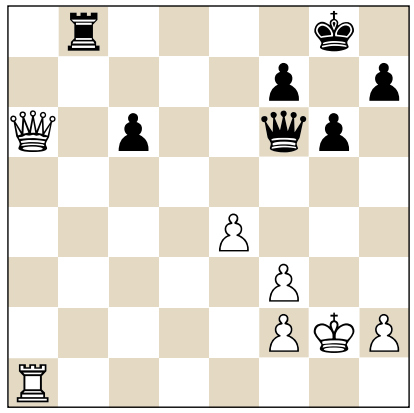
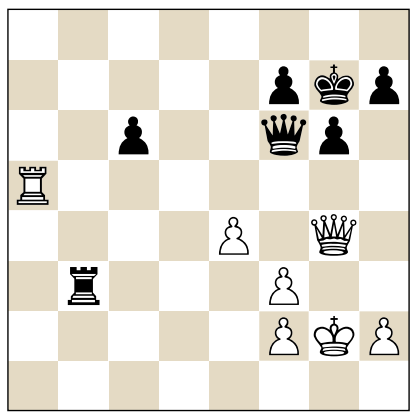
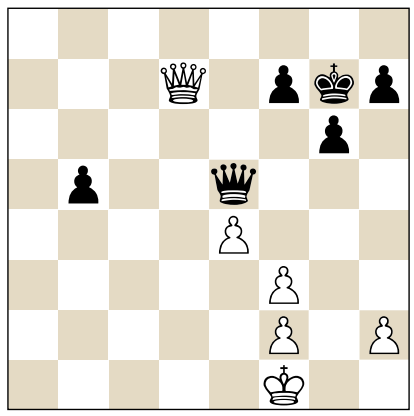


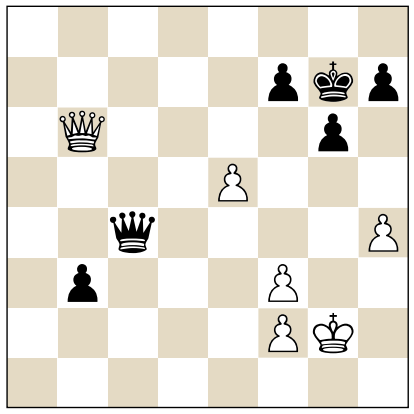
26.♖a5? 26.♖a3! was not the only move, but one of a few very neat ones. White should keep the queen active and for that he should have his f3-pawn firmly protected with the rook: 26...♖b5 (26...♕g5+ 27.♔h3!) 27.♕c8+ ♔g7 28.♖a8 ♖g5+ 29.♔f1, and White holds thanks to his counterplay. **26...♖b3 27.♕c8+?** 27.♕e2 would at least keep the b5-square in check. **27...♔g7 28.♕g4** I think Karjakin simply blundered the rook swap. I don't think he would have misjudged the queen ending, because it looks extremely dangerous for White.



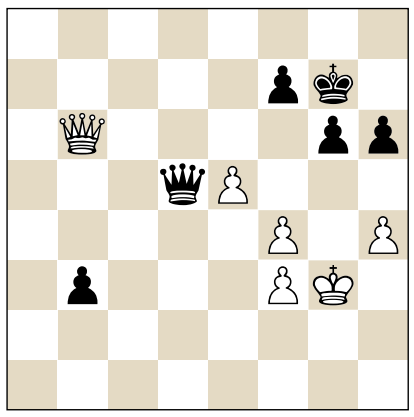
28...♖b5! 29.♖xb5 cxb5 30.♕d7 ♕g5+ 31.♔f1 ♕e5?! 31...♕c5!, and the queen is less centralized but better placed.



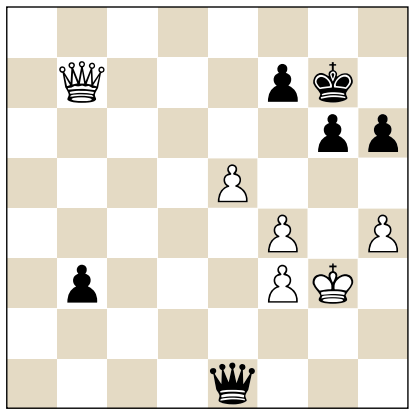
32.h4?! Better was 32.♕b7!, stopping ...b5-b4 for the time being: 32...♕c5 33.♔g2, and now Black can't push the pawn forward, since 33...b4 is met with 34.e5!.
32...b4 33.♕b7 ♕c3 34.e5 b3 35.♔g2 ♕c4 36.♕b6



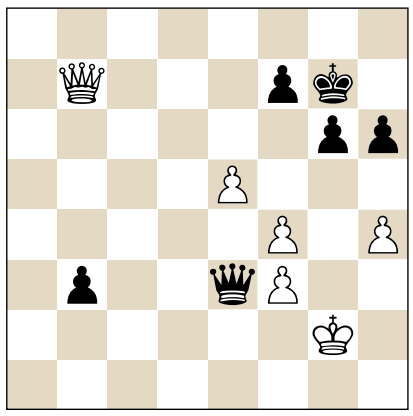
36...h6
36...♕xh4 would be not such a bad deal, as it's not so easy to promote the b-pawn: 37.♕xb3 ♕g5+ 38.♔f1 ♕xe5 and it is hard to judge such an unusual endgame, but my feeling is that it is objectively tenable.
37.♔g3 ♕d5 38.f4 ♔h7 39.♕b8 ♕c4 40.f3 ♕c3 41.♕f8 ♕c4 42.♕b8 ♔g7 43.♕b6 ♕d5



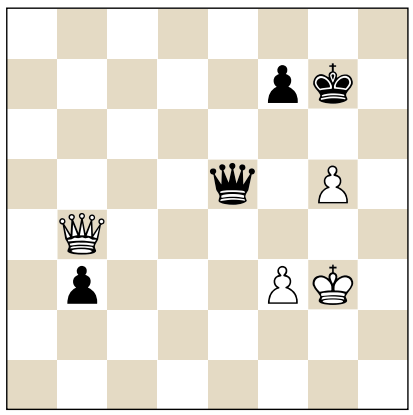
44.♕b8
Better was 44.♕b4!, not letting the queen enter the annoying g1-e1 areas: 44...♕d1 45.♕c3 ♕c2 46.♕d4, and it seems that the black b-pawn cannot make the final two steps without allowing a perpetual of sorts.
44...♕d1! 45.♕b7 ♕g1+ 46.♔h3 ♕e3 47.♔g2 ♕e2+ 48.♔g3 ♕e1+ It appears that the checks are useless, since ...b2 is going to be met with e6!, but White didn't spot the trap.



49.♔g2?
49.♔h3! ♕e3 50.♔g2, and now it's Black to move again. Brilliant!
49...♕e3!

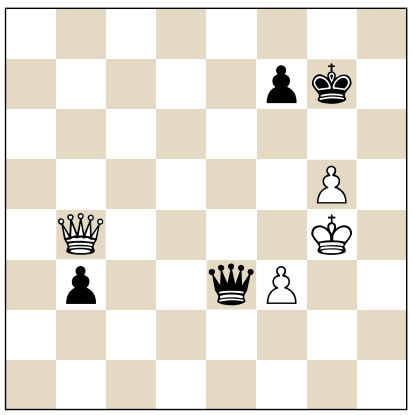


50.♕b4 Now, after 50.♔g3, Black will win: 50...g5! 51.hxg5 hxg5 52.fxg5 ♕xe5+ 53.f4 ♕e3+ 54.♔g4 ♕e2+ 55.♔g3 b2, and here White is unable to stop the ...♕d3 or ...♕e1 check.
50...g5 51.hxg5 hxg5 52.fxg5 ♕e2+ 53.♔g3 ♕xe5+?
With the queen on b4, both players missed that the evaluation of the position is completely different from the lines after 50.♔g3.
53...b2! wins: 54.e6 ♕e5+ 55.♔g2 fxe6.

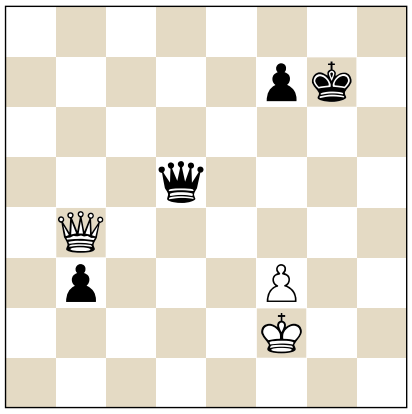


54.♔f2
54.f4! had to be played (here or later).

With the queen standing on b4 and not on b7, White has an important resource: 54...♕e3+ 55.♔g4 ♕e2+ 56.♔g3 b2 57.♕c3+! ♔h7 58.♕b3! ♕e1+ 59.♔f3!.
54...♕h2+ 55.♔e3 ♕g1+ 56.♔f4 ♕c1+ 57.♔g4 ♕e3 It's quite funny that Mamedyarov actually managed to create a zugzwang and force Karjakin to play 58.f4. But even here, Sergey didn't spot the defence and just decided to give up the pawn and go for a slowly losing position.



58.♔g3?? Again there was 58.f4!, with the same comment as on move 54. Since the line is very important, I will give it again: 58...♕e2+ 59.♔g3 b2 60.♕c3+! ♔h7 61.♕b3! ♕e1+ 62.♔f3!, and Black is too late to queen and fight off the perpetual at the same time.
58...♕xg5+ 59.♔f2 ♕d5



White has no chances of giving a perpetual here and Black gradually cruises to victory.
60.♔e3 ♔g6 61.♔e2 ♔f6 62.♔e3 ♔e6 63.♕b6+ ♔d7 64.♕a7+ ♔c6 65.♕a6+ ♔c5 66.♕a4 ♕c4 67.♕a5+ ♔c6 68.♕a1 ♔b5 69.♕b2 ♔b4 70.♔d2 ♕f4+ 71.♔e1 ♕h4+ White resigned.

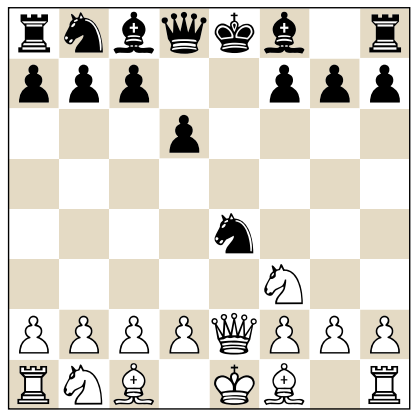
■ ■ ■

One of the key games was the encounter in Round 4 between Kramnik and Caruana. The Russian seemed to be on his way to another victory that would strengthen his leading position. Instead, he lost control and allowed Caruana to take the lead.

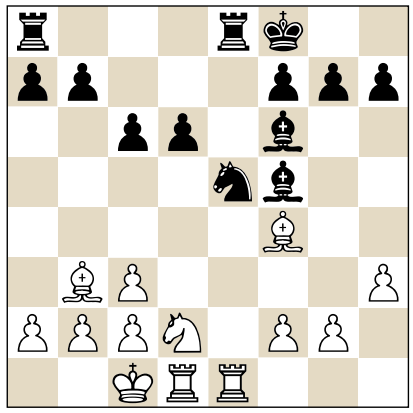
NOTES BY
Jan Timman

Vladimir Kramnik
Fabiano Caruana
Berlin 2018 (4)
Petroff Defence

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♕e2



You might think that, after his magnificent start (2½ out of 3), Kramnik would have been happy with a draw, but this is not necessarily the case. At some time during the 1980s, Spassky once told me that this system is very suitable for playing for a win, leading, as it does, to a queenless middlegame with lots of manoeuvring space.
5...♕e7 6.♘c3 ♘xc3 7.dxc3 ♕xe2+ 8.♗xe2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 ♗e7 10.0-0-0 0-0 11.♖he1 ♗f6 12.♘d2 ♖e8 13.♗f3 ♘e5 14.♗f4 ♔f8 15.♗d5 c6 16.♗b3 ♗f5 17.h3
So far, the game has developed quite peacefully. It is hard to imagine that, 10 moves from now, the players will be at each other's throats in an extremely sharp fight, culminating in a pawn race.

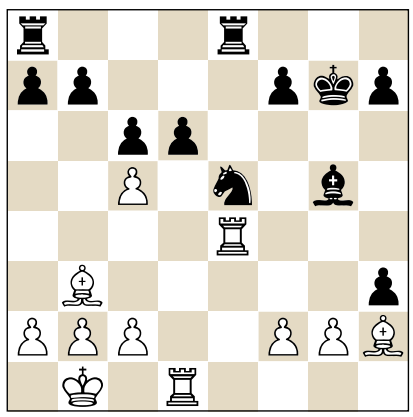


17...g5 The first sharp move. The alternative was 17...h5.

18.♗h2 ♔g7

With 18...d5, Black could have poured oil on the waves. White would have nothing better than 19.c4, offering a bishop swap leading to a dead-drawn position.

19.c4 g4 20.♘e4 ♗xe4 21.♖xe4 ♗g5+ 22.♔b1 gxh3 23.c5



Kramnik goes adventuring, and I must agree that the text is very tempting. Objectively best was 23.gxh3, after which Black restores the balance with 23...f5.

23...f5

Caruana picks up the gauntlet. 23...hxg2 24.cxd6 ♘f3 25.♖g4 ♔f6 26.♖xg2 ♖ad8 would have given him a good position, with a very well-positioned knight. The text is more ambitious.

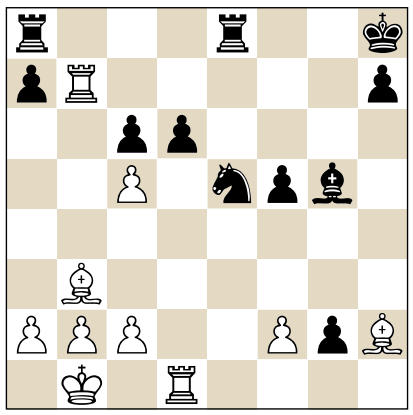
24.♖b4

This was what Kramnik had in mind. He is going to harvest pawns on the queenside; but with the result that Black will get a dangerous majority on the kingside.

24...hxg2 25.♖xb7+ ♔h8!

The best square for the king. Now the knight is poised to jump to f3.

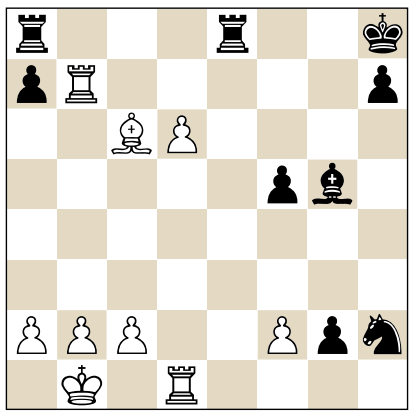
More drama. In Round 4, Vladimir Kramnik seemed to be on his way to another victory. Instead, he lost control and allowed Fabiano Caruana to take the lead.



26.cxd6 ♘f3 27.♗a4

Passive moves are no good. White has to sacrifice his queen's bishop in order to create a strong pawn front.

27...♘xh2 28.♗xc6

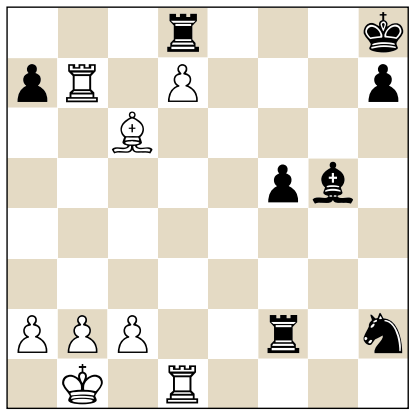


28...♖ad8!

A power move that Kramnik had underestimated. Black does not need to move the rook under attack. In the press conference, Caruana said that he had tried to get the spectacular 28...♖e4 to work. After 29.♖g1 ♖e6 30.♗xg2 ♖xd6 31.♖h1 ♖ad8 Black is better. But the text is more forcing.

29.d7 ♖e2 30.♗xg2 ♖xf2 31.♗c6

Kramnik's courage to go adventuring like this is admirable. He is a piece down, and couldn't possibly have calculated all the consequences. The white majority looks dangerous, but objectively speaking Black is winning here. In time-trouble, however, this is very hard to prove.



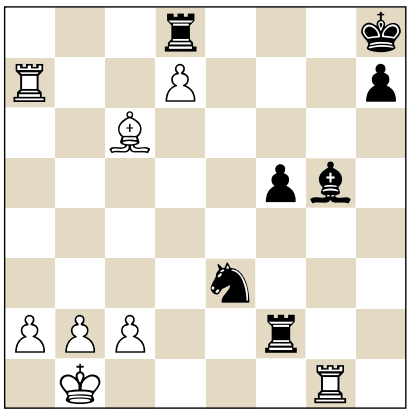
31...♘g4 Stronger was 31...♘f1!, the reason being that it would have given Black the extra check on d2, and White cannot advance his c-pawn. After 32.a4 ♘d2+ 33.♔a2 ♘c4 34.♗b5 ♖xc2 35.♔b3 ♖d2 36.♖xd2 ♘xd2+ 37.♔c3 h5 the black passed pawns would be too strong.

32.♖xa7

32.c4 was called for to set the majority moving as quickly as possible. After 32...♘e3 33.♖g1 ♗e7 34.♖c1 ♗c5

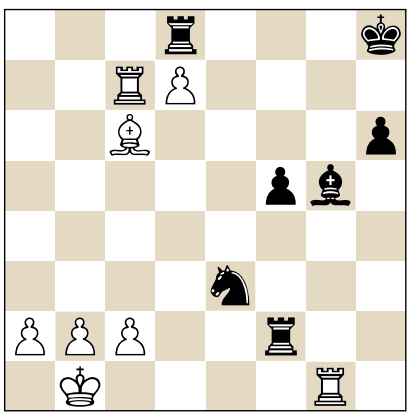
35.♖b5 ♗d4 36.c5 White is just in time to preserve the balance.

32...♘e3 33.♖g1



33...h6? In time-trouble – he had only two minutes left – Caruana goes wrong. In such sharp positions, the slightest hesitation may have serious consequences. He should have struck with 33...♖xc2, the point being that after 34.♗a4 ♖f2 White still cannot capture on g5 because of the mate. Without the c-pawn, the white majority is a lot less dangerous, allowing the black majority to decide the issue.

34.♖c7! A subtle move, indirectly protecting White's c-pawn.



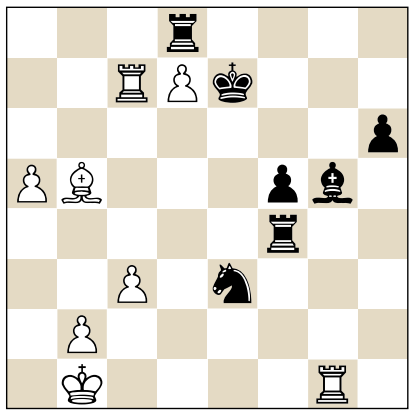
34...♔g7 Black wants to take his king to the centre. The point of White's move would become clear after 34...♖xc2 35.♖xg5! ♖xd7! 36.♖c8+ ♔h7 37.♗xd7 ♖xc8 38.♖xf5!, with excellent winning chances for White. A beautiful, study-like variation.

35.a4 ♔f7 36.♗b5

A winning attempt in mutual time-trouble. After 36.a5 ♖xc2 37.a6 ♗f6 38.a7 ♖xb2+ 39.♔c1 ♖c2+ the game would have ended in a draw by perpetual check.

36...♔e7 37.a5 ♖f4 38.c3

Keeping the black rook away from b4.



38...♔d6

An unfortunate move, but with so little time this was very hard to see. He should have gone 38...♖g4 first, after which White has a choice between two rook moves:

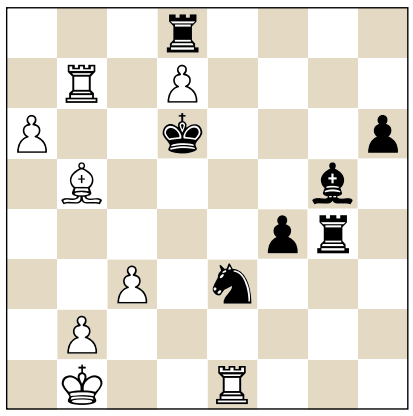
A) 39.♖h1, and now after 39...♘d5 40.♖c5 ♔d6 41.♖c8 ♖xd7 42.♖d1 ♖d8 43.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 44.c4 ♗xa5 45.♖xd5+ ♔e7 46.♖xf5 ♖g5 47.♖f1 h5, and White's winning chances are minimal.

B) 39.♖e1 f4 40.a6 f3 (this is the difference with the game; now Black does not need to take his king to d6) 41.♖c8 ♖xd7 42.♖e8+! ♔xe8 43.a7 f2 44.a8♕+ ♔e7, and the position is equal, e.g. 45.♖h1 ♖g1+ 46.♔a2 ♖xh1 47.♕xh1 ♖d5, and the f-pawn is so strong that White has no winning chances at all.

39.♖b7 ♖g4 40.♖e1!

Just before the time-control, Kramnik unleashes a power move. He intends to capture on e3 if the f-pawn continues its advance.

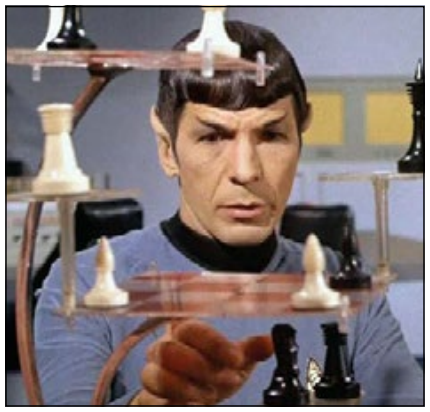
40...f4 41.a6



41...h5

Celeb 64

John Henderson



Leonard Nimoy

In the pantheon of geekdom, Leonard Nimoy's iconic Mr. Spock on *Star Trek* holds a top spot. The pointy-eared, mind-melding, neck-pinching half-Vulcan science officer on the Enterprise is credited with being the first to popularize three-dimensional chess. And he's perceived to be 'unbeatable' at this futuristic version of chess, much to the annoyance of Captain Kirk.

Following the cancellation of *Star Trek* in 1969, Nimoy was soon to find work again in the ensemble cast of the cult spy series *Mission: Impossible*. This time as 'The Great Paris', a master of makeup and disguise… and his chess skills were soon to come in useful here also.

In the 1970 episode 'A Game of Chess' the MI team had to take down a nefarious grandmaster scheming to rob a vault of all its gold, that's conveniently located in the same hotel as the chess tournament he's the favourite to win. But Paris foils his plan by beating him, and he does so by cheating, using a false hearing aid that was relaying him all the moves from a super-computer.

Nimoy's love for chess was highlighted in the 2016 documentary on his life, *For the Love of Spock*. His filmmaker son, Adam Nimoy, explained that his father's passion for chess was such that their home always had numerous chess sets around it, and he and his sister Julie would spend evenings challenging their father to the more conventional two-dimensional variety of chess. ■

Caruana quickly added this move, probably because he wasn't sure that they had made the time-control.

Critical was 41...f3. After 42.a7 f2 43.♖xe3 ♗xe3 44.♖b8 ♗xa7 45.♖xd8 ♖g1+ 46.♔a2 f1♕ 47.♗xf1 ♖xf1 48.♖a8 White has a winning rook ending.

42.a7 White is clearly far ahead in the race.

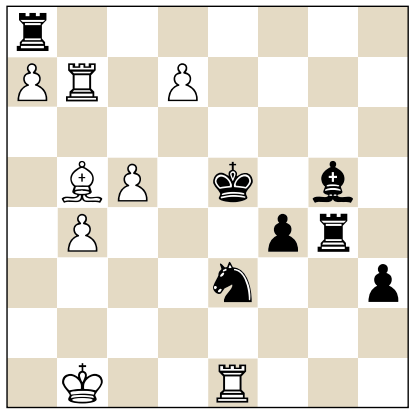
42...♖a8 43.b4

After an 11-minute think. The advance of the b-pawn is strategically justified, and it doesn't throw away White's win. But as Caruana indicated afterwards, 43.c4! would have been stronger, since White would be threatening 44.c5+ ♔xc5 45.♖c1+, followed by 46.♖c8, and Black is helpless.

Caruana had been planning 43...♔c5. Judging by Kramnik's reaction during the press conference, he had wanted to avoid this king move, although White would win easily after 44.b4+ ♔d4 45.♗c6 ♔c3 46.♖c7. The black king has penetrated, but poses no danger.

43...h4 44.c4 Consistent; but 44.d8♕+ ♗xd8 45.♖d7+ would also have been possible. After 45...♔e6 46.♗c6 ♖xa7 47.♖xa7 ♖g5 48.♔b2 White has a winning position.

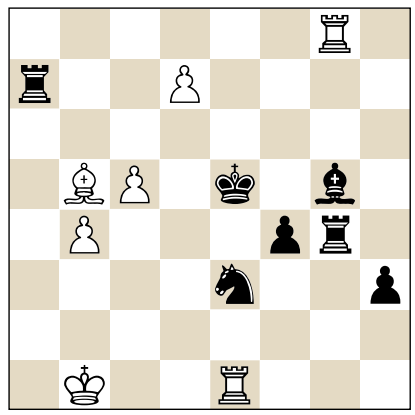
44...h3 45.c5+ ♔e5



46.♖b8? Meanwhile, Kramnik was running out of time again: 18 minutes for 15 moves. The text, flashed out quickly, throws away the win. The correct approach was 46.♗c6 h2 47.♖h1!, stopping the black h-pawn.

After 47...♖g1+ 48.♔b2 ♖xh1 49.♗xh1 ♗f6 50.♔c1! (not 50.♔b3, in view of 50...♘f5! 51.♔c4 ♘d4, and Black just manages to save his skin) 50...♗g5 51.d8♕ ♗xd8 52.♖d7 the black rook is lost, after which the connected passed pawns will decide the issue.

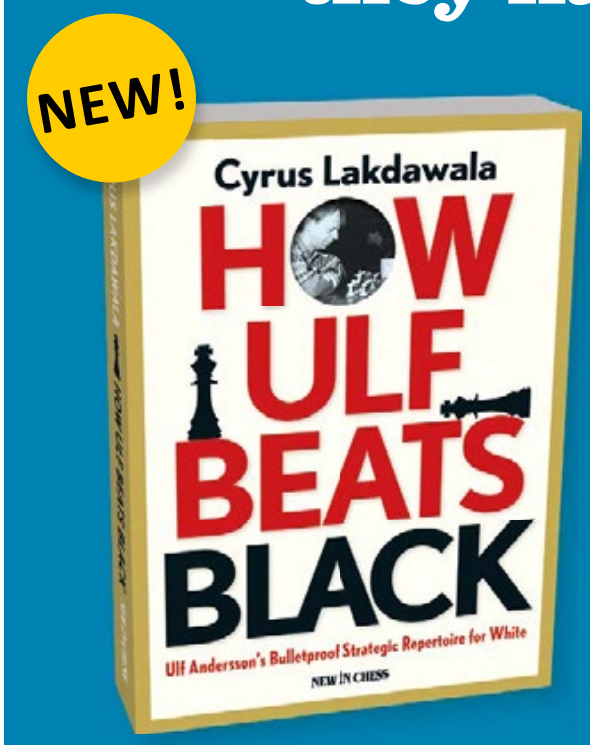
46...♖xa7 47.♖g8 'And wins,' Kramnik must have thought.



47...♗f6!

A vicious resource. Out of the blue, Caruana launches a mating attack.

Your opponents will think they have nothing to fear...



Legendary Swedish GM Ulf Andersson almost never lost a game and kept scoring wins from quiet positions. Quiet positons? Acclaimed chess author Cyrus Lakdawala has played Andersson's openings for decades and explains that those positions only LOOK quiet. Andersson's opponents usually thought they had nothing to fear, until it was too late.

How Ulf Beats Black is much more than just a chess opening manual. Lakdawala's lucid explanations offer a practical guide to positional technique that will improve your endgame skills as well. On top of that it is also a games collection of a great but often misunderstood chess player.

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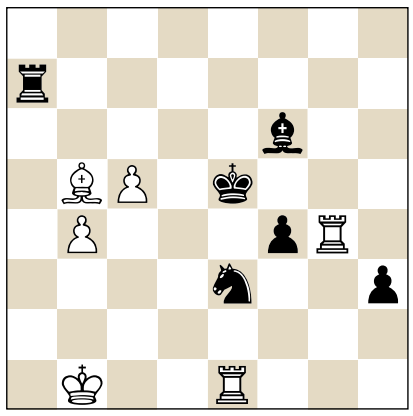
48.d8♕ It must have been with a heavy heart that Kramnik gave up this mighty pawn. He had no choice, however, because after 48.♖xg4 ♔f5 Black threatens mate on a1.

48...♗xd8 49.♖xg4 ♗f6



Materially speaking, White is still OK, but the black pieces are posted in extremely active positions, and Black's passed pawns undoubtedly carry a punch. It is always hard to switch to defensive mode after giving away the win.

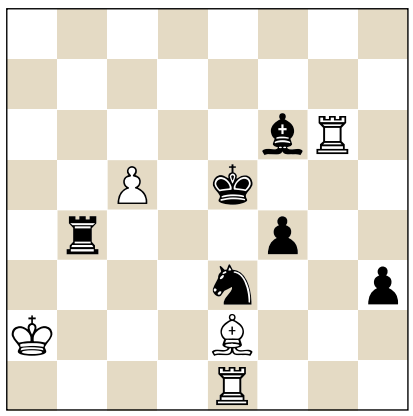
50.♖g6

This is good. White wants to try to eliminate the strong black bishop.

50...♖b7 And the proud white pawn front is hoovered up.

51.♗e2 51.♗f1 was also sufficient to maintain the balance. After 51...♖xb4+ 52.♔a2 ♗h4 53.♖e2 ♔f5 White has 54.♖b6, after which neither player can go for the win.

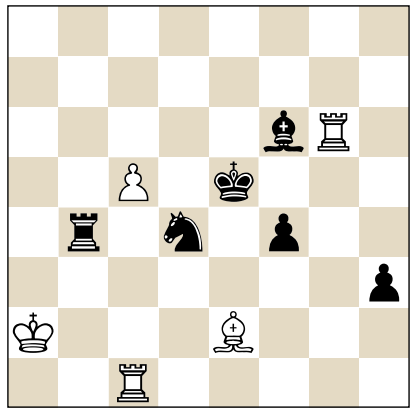
51...♖xb4+ 52.♔a2



52...♘c2 Caruana had 15 minutes left here, half of which he used for the text. This knight move is probably a winning attempt, albeit a very risky one. With 52...♔e6 Black could have forced a draw. After 53.♖b1 ♖a4+ 54.♔b3 ♖a8 he always has the option of perpetual check.

53.♖c1 ♘d4

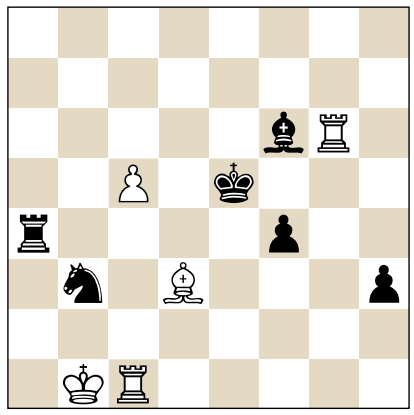
The point of the previous move. But the knight is no more useful on d4 than on e3. Black should have inserted 53...h2, and after 54.♖h6 ♘d4 55.♗g4 f3 the position is equal.



54.♗d3 With more time, Kramnik would undoubtedly have found 54.♗g4!, and suddenly Black is in big trouble in view of a devastating check on e1. After 54...♖a4+ 55.♔b2 ♗h8 56.c6 ♖a7 57.♗xh3 White is probably winning. His c-pawn is very strong.

54...♖a4+ Now Black can justify his knight manoeuvre.

55.♔b1 ♘b3

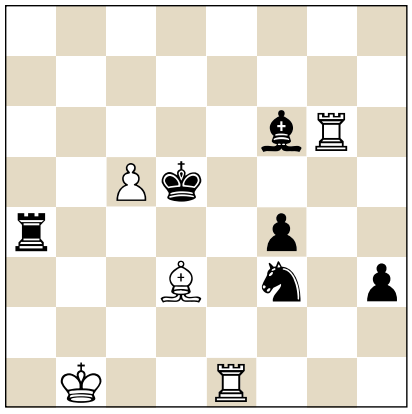


56.♖e1+ A precarious position to play in time-trouble. With 56.♖c2 White could also have preserved the balance, e.g. 56...♔e6 57.♖e2+ ♔f7 58.♖h6 ♖a1+ 59.♔c2 ♘d4+ 60.♔d2 ♘xe2 61.♔xe2, with a draw.

56...♔d5 57.♔c2 ♘d4+ 58.♔b1

And here, 58.♔c1 was a good alternative. A check on a1 is harmless now, because White can interpose his bishop. After 58...♗e5 59.♖a6 a draw is a likely outcome.

58...♘f3



59.♖d1? The final error. With 59.♖xf6 ♘xe1 60.♗f1 h2 61.♖h6 White would narrowly have made the draw.

59...♖a1+ Winning. **60.♔c2 ♖xd1** White cannot take back, because this would allow the h-pawn to queen unopposed. **61.♗a6 ♖d2+ 62.♔c1 ♗b2+ 63.♔b1 ♔xc5 64.♗b7 ♘e5 65.♖f6 f3 66.♖f5 f2** White resigned.

■ ■ ■

Wesley So never really got going and will prefer to see his first Candidates tournament as a learning experience. The only game that he won may serve as an example of the many fascinating fights fought by all participants. Moreover, it was a great game on the American's part and a crucial one for Aronian, since it dealt a further heavy blow to his aspirations.

NOTES BY
Wesley So

Wesley So
Levon Aronian
Berlin 2018 (6)
Ruy Lopez, Anti-Marshall Attack

Berlin is an interesting city, and our long stay there, although sleety, snowy, rainy, bitingly cold and full of personal ups and downs, was not unpleasant. The food everywhere was terrific and the FIDE staff was always kind and worked to preserve order (with chess personalities you get a

medal just for trying that). The venue was ... okay ... maybe a bit odd. Since major chess events tend to draw a lot of parents with young children, I am not sure dark and edgy was the right approach.

I started this event with a bad case of nerves that took me by surprise. Since I don't normally get nervous, I was confused by my own symptoms and wondered if a cold sweat and an accelerated heartbeat meant I was dying or something. General unfocused anxiety is hard to understand. With everything going blurry for me, by the time I got to Levon in Round 6, I was aching to do something right on the board.

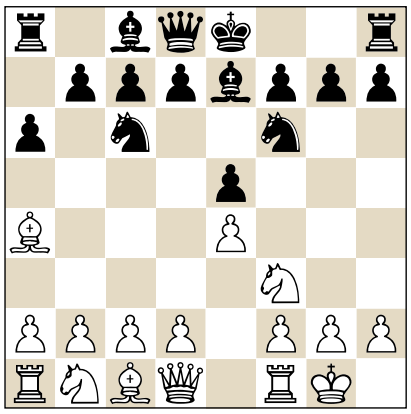
1.e4 e5

Levon doesn't really play anything but 1...e5 these days, and why should he? He gets good results with it.

2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6

I thought he might go for the Berlin with 3...♘f6, and perhaps Levon should play it more often.

4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7

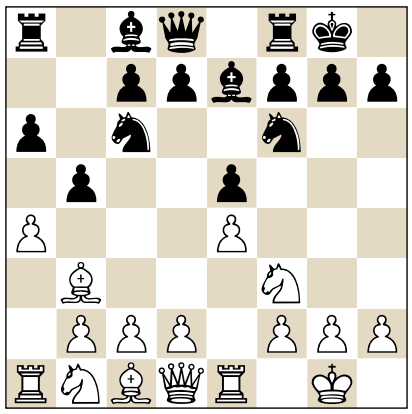


Black has many alternatives on move 5, but as usual Levon is very confident and happy to play the Marshall against anybody.

6.♖e1 I was wondering if I should go for 6.d3 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.a3 0-0 9.♘c3 and play this very popular variation. It does seem to give White a 'no risk' and easier to play position, but the downside is that the line is too well analysed.

6...b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.a4

After 8.d3 d6 the awesomely shocking move 9.♗d2!? was used twice against Levon in the Candidates. I am still trying to figure out what the point of this move is. Anyway, I wonder who first came up with the idea. Grischuk, Caruana, or Kasim?

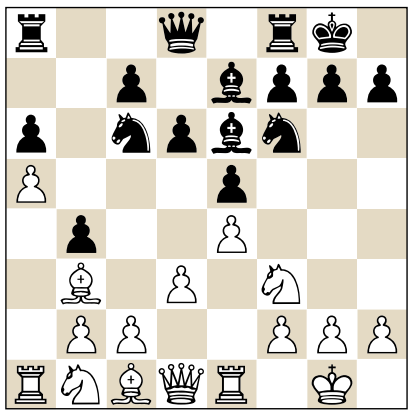


8...b4 This weakens the c4-square, but who cares? Black has had good results here recently. 8...♗b7 9.d3 d5 10.exd5 ♘xd5 is a good alternative.

9.a5 By going for this move first, White avoids the variation 9.d3 ♗c5. 9.d4 d6 was proved to be okay for Black in the recent games Caruana vs Matlakov and Karjakin vs Carlsen. I also tried it against Levon in London three months earlier.

9...d6 9...♗c5 10.c3 wins a tempo, since I get d4 in one move.

10.d3 ♗e6



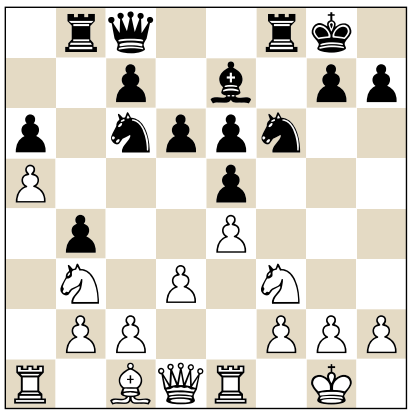
11.♗xe6 These days, everyone just goes for the doubled pawn when they get the chance. I guess no one likes double pawns. In this position Black gets the open f-file and some light-square control in return.

But 11.♘bd2 ♗xb3 12.♘xb3 is a valid alternative and might be reasonable. White might get a slight advantage here if he gets in a quick d3-d4.

11...fxe6 12.♘bd2 ♖b8 13.♘b3

13.c3 was played by Carlsen against Aronian and is another critical move.

13...♕c8 Protecting both the a6- and e6-pawns. 13...♕e8 is the alternative.



14.h3 White prepares ♗e3 by preventing ...♘g4. 14.d4 is the most principled idea, to open the centre, but Black seems completely fine there.

14...♘d8

Black has many good alternatives here, e.g. 14...♘d7 or 14...♕b7 (intending ...♕b5), but 14...♘d8 looks the most straightforward. Just play ...c5 and equalize... why not?

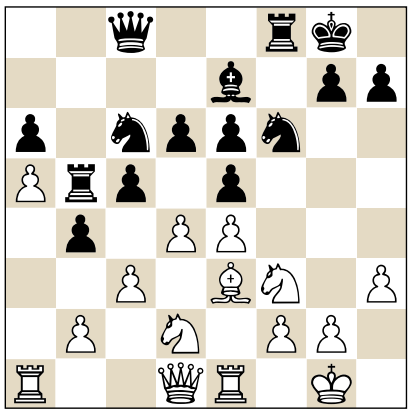
15.♗e3

It is better to open the centre right away, but White does not have much after 15.d4 exd4 16.♘bxd4 c5 17.♘b3 ♘d7.

15...c5 16.♘bd2 ♘c6 17.c3 ♖b5

After 17...d5?! 18.♗g5 the doubled pawns are clearly going nowhere.

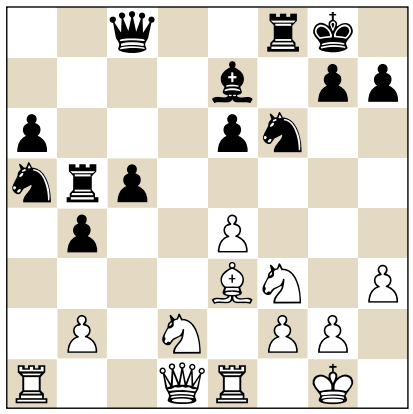
18.d4



18...exd4

Levon mentioned afterwards that Black could have equalized with 18...bxc3 19.bxc3 exd4 20.cxd4 c4 21.♘xc4 ♘xe4, and with such a well-placed rook on b5 Black cannot be worse: 22.♘b6 ♕e8. All Black's pieces are active, too.

19.cxd4 ♘xa5 20.dxc5 dxc5

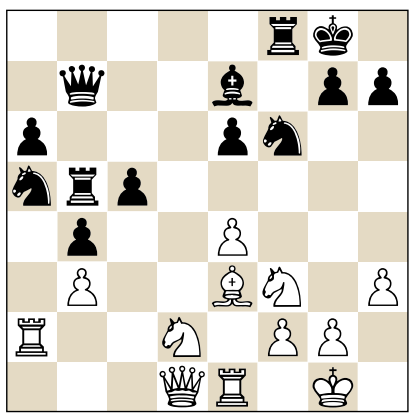


I was quite happy when he took the pawn. White has at least enough compensation for it and Black's pieces are uncoordinated. In fact White has many moves to get good play. 21.♖c1, 21.♖a4, 21.♕e2, are all possibilities. I chose:

21.♖a2!? Because it seemed like a very sophisticated way to play.

21...♕b7 Probably not the best. In many cases, the e6-pawn will lack protection. The computer likes 21...♘d7, with the idea of ...♘b8-c6.

22.b3 A good move that simply aims to put my queen on c2 and then activate the rest of my pieces.

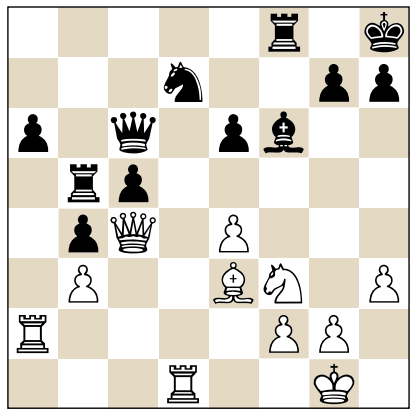


22...♔h8

Levon played this quickly. I thought he would take on e4, but he estimated correctly that this was too dangerous. After 22...♘xe4 23.♘xe4 ♕xe4 24.♗g5 ♕b7 Black is two pawns up. But here 25.♖d2!, which I did not see, is very strong, leaving Black on the verge of losing.

After 22...♘d7, Levon didn't like 23.♕e2, because the queen is well placed here.

23.♕c2 ♘d7 24.♖ea1 ♗d8 25.♘c4 ♘xc4 26.♕xc4 ♗f6 27.♖d1 ♕c6



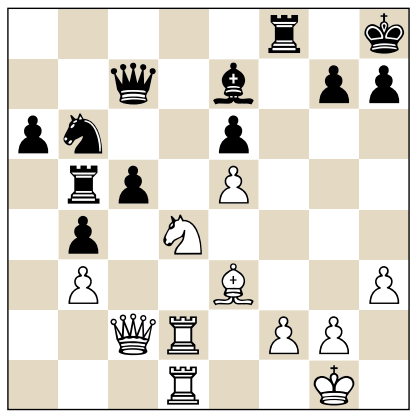
28.♖ad2

28.♗f4 e5 29.♗g5! is very strong, according to the computer. Black's king can quickly get very vulnerable.

28...♘b6 After 28...♘e5 29.♘xe5 ♗xe5 30.♖d8 ♖b8 31.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 32.♗xc5 wins a pawn.

29.♕c2 ♕c7 29...♕c8 was better, as after 30.e5 ♗e7 31.♗g5 ♕e8 Black is only slightly worse.

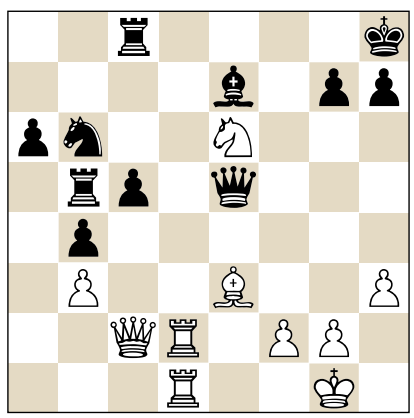
30.e5 ♗e7 31.♘d4



31...♖c8

31...♕xe5 32.♘xb5 axb5 33.♖e2 ♕c3 is what I had expected. Here White is better, but I have to play very accurately to increase my advantage: 34.♕e4! ♕xb3 35.♖ee1, a difficult variation to see, but apparently very strong.

32.♘xe6 ♕xe5



MARIA EMELIANOVA

Wesley So will prefer to see his first Candidates as a learning experience. The American won only one game, but that instructive win showed what a fine and accomplished elite player he is.

33.♘f4

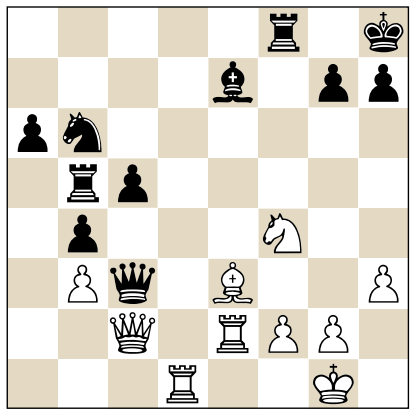
A very powerful shot would be 33.♖d6!, which Levon spotted! I would play this very beautiful move if I was given another chance! White is threatening ♗f4 and wins. If you run this position with the computer, and you keep pressing the space bar, it will give the line 33...c4 (33...♗xd6 34.♘g5) 34.♗d4 ♕xd6 35.♗xg7+ ♔g8 36.♖xd6 ♗xd6 37.♕d1 ♖d5 38.♗d4 ♔f7 39.♘g5+ ♖xg5 40.♗xb6, and apparently Black's king is way too vulnerable.

33...♖f8? Black panicked. 33...♔g8! would probably be enough to hold.

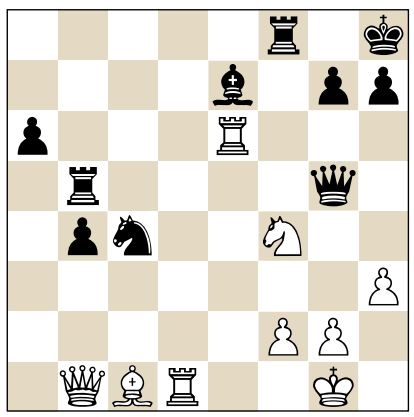
34.♖e2

Now I am back on track.

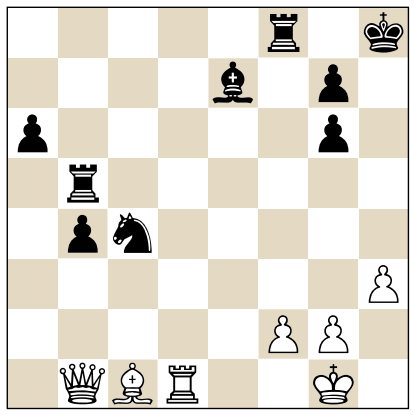
34...♕c3



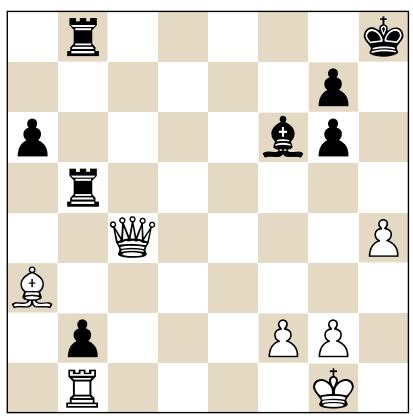
35.♕b1
35.♕a2! a5 36.♗c1 is even faster but what I played is enough.
35...♕f6 36.♗c1 c4 37.bxc4 ♘xc4 38.♖e6 ♕g5



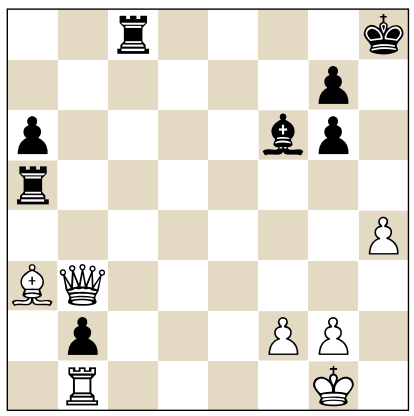
39.♘g6+ Here I spent all my remaining time making sure I hadn't missed anything.
With a few minutes left on the board it was very difficult to spot 39.♖d7 ♗f6 40.♖f7! ♖bb8 41.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 42.♕xb4 ♖c8 43.♕xc4, winning.
39...♕xg6 40.♖xg6 hxg6



41.♕e4!
The most accurate. Without this the win could be quite tricky.
41...♗f6 Black can't keep the knight, so he just tries to get some kind of fortress. 41...♘e5 runs into 42.f4 ♗c5+ 43.♔h1 ♘f7 44.♕xg6, winning.
42.♕xc4 b3 43.♗a3 ♖fb8 44.♖b1 b2 45.h4



This position might look like very easy to win, but over the board it's not so trivial (note to all you kibitzers watching the engines instead of the game – chess is harder than you think). If Black could get ♖+♗+♙♙ vs ♕+♙♙♙, it might be a draw.
45...♖a5 If 45...a5, 46.♗d6 ♖8b6 47.g4, and White wins.
46.♕d3 ♖d8 47.♕b3 ♖c8



48.♕b7 48.g4 might well be the easiest. After g5 the black bishop will have no safe place to go. But then I saw that I could win the g6-pawn by force.
48...♖d8 49.♕b3 ♖c8 50.♕b4 ♖b5 51.♕g4 ♖c3 52.♗xb2 ♖xb2 53.♖xb2 ♖c1+ 54.♔h2 ♗xb2 55.♕xg6 The game is totally lost for Black. The black king is simply too vulnerable and the a-pawn is not fast enough. Nor does his bishop have a safe place to park.

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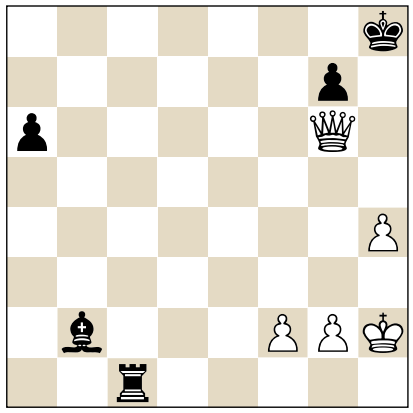
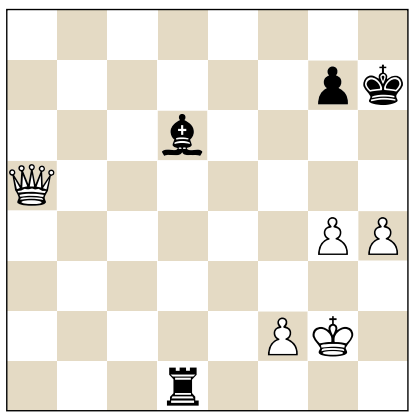


55...♖a1 If 55...♗f6 then 56.g4.
56.g4 a5 57.♕h5+ ♔g8 58.♕b5 ♗a3 59.♕e5 ♖d1 60.♕e6+
60.♕xa5 saves us a few moves, but I thought I could win a piece by force.
60...♔h7 61.♕e4+ ♔h8 62.♕a8+ ♔h7 63.♕xa5 ♗d6+ 64.♔g2



Levon could have resigned here with a clear conscience, but I suppose he thought: why not make a few more moves?
64...♖d4 65.♕f5+ ♔h8 66.♕h5+ ♔g8 67.g5 ♔f8 68.♕g6 ♗e7 69.♕f5+ ♔e8 70.♔h3 ♖d6 71.♕h7 ♔f7 72.f4 ♖d4 73.♕f5+ ♔e8 74.♕e5 ♖b4 75.♔g4 ♔f8 76.♕f5+ ♔e8 77.♕e6 ♖d4 78.♕e5 Black resigned.

I wish I had played better chess in the Candidates, but I did what I could and you can't change the past. I have events ahead of me and hopefully those will benefit from what I learned here. Only God knows the road that I will take, so it's probably best to live one moment at a time, enjoy the journey and not look too far behind, or too far ahead.

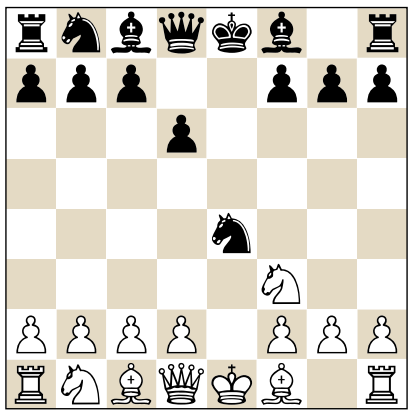
■ ■ ■

With the following game we have reached the decisive phase of the tournament. In a must-win situation, Sergey Karjakin kept his chances alive in Round 12 by beating (and catching up with) Fabiano Caruana, who at that point was sharing the lead with Mamedyarov. With this win, Karjakin pulled more than level, because it would make his tiebreak better than Caruana's if they were to end up sharing first place.

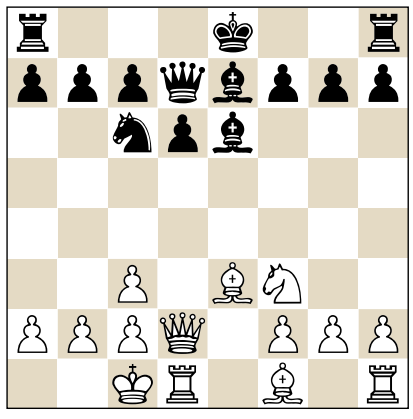
NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Sergey Karjakin
Fabiano Caruana
Berlin 2018 (12)
Petroff Defence, Nimzowitsch Variation

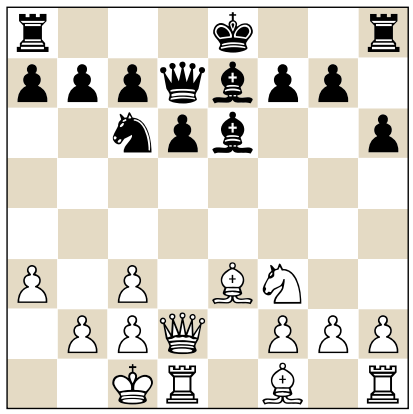
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4



5.♘c3 This move was considered harmless in Karpov's time, but it has been an established main line for over a decade now, and small wonder, because the queenside pawn structure after dxc3 secures a safe position for the white king after castling queenside.
Recently, Magnus Carlsen's brilliant analytical team revived the old move 5.♕e2, and although Fabi was continuously put onto the defensive, he somehow managed to emerge unscathed, scoring 2 out of 3 in his games against Carlsen, Kramnik and So.
5...♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♘c6 There are many ways in which Black can handle this variation, but essentially they can be divided into two categories: one in which Black aims to castle queenside and one in which he castles kingside.
7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.♕d2
The traditional way of playing this variation. I picked up the fashionable 8.♗d3 recently, scoring an important victory over Hou Yifan in Wijk aan Zee. The point is to develop the queen to e2 rather than to d2, where it obstructs the future d1-rook. It was introduced into top practice by Michael Adams in his game against my young self, back in the day when I was playing the Petroff exclusively and no one was there to stop me.
8...♗e6 9.0-0-0 ♕d7

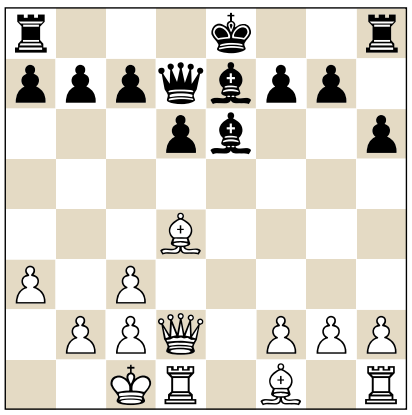


10.a3 10.♔b1 was considered to be the most universal move here, soon followed by the subtle a3, b3 waiting moves (an idea of Peter Leko's, I believe, who won a masterpiece against Jan Smeets in Wijk aan Zee almost 10 years ago).
10...h6
A relatively fresh twist to a well-known theme. The problem is that 10...0-0-0 is met by 11.♘d4!, when 11...♘xd4 12.♕xd4 leads to a double attack on the pawns a7 and g7, so White can afford to make a useful move.
10...a6 and 10...♗f6 are typical useful moves for this variation. White has a broad choice of options.



11.♘d4!? In a recent game, Caruana's second, Rustam Kasimdzhanov started with the typical 11.♔b1, when his lesser known opponent replied with the by now typical idea 11...♖g8!? (Kasimdzhanov-Li Di, ½-½, 71, Chengdu 2017).

11...♘xd4 12.♗xd4



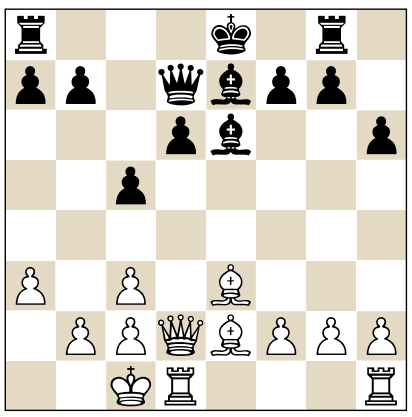
12...♖g8 Typical. The question is always whether White will be able to use a couple of tempi until Black castles long to establish a small positional plus, or whether the drawish tendency of the position will prevail.

13.♗e2

13.c4 is the standard thing to do, intending ♕c3 and preparing to meet ...c5 with ♗c3. Eventually the position revolves around the equalizing ...d6-d5 break. Here, clearly ♔b1 would have been more useful than a3, but you can't have it all.

13...c5 14.♗e3

White's advantage is not significant, and if Black is bothered by it, he should probably choose another opening variation. Here I believe Fabiano took a superficial decision.



14...d5 Optically a fine move. The pawn on d6 appears backward and the d5-square looks weak, and you would think that if you start with ...d5 and White is unable to stop ...0-0-0, then Black will solve all of his problems. In fact, this move also has some downsides, as Black will have to constantly watch his rather weak pawns on d5 and c5. Preparing a ...d4 push seems impossible and the structurally desirable ...b6 weakens the long diagonal.

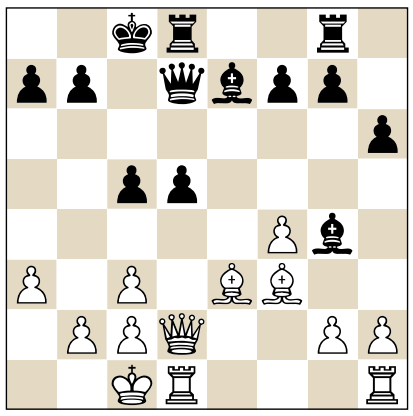
Tighter was 14...0-0-0 15.f4 g6 16.♗f3 h5 17.h3 ♗f6 18.♖he1 ♖ge8, because this is fine for Black.

15.f4!? Preparing ♗f3, which will be nicely placed behind the pawn, as per the Soviet-School books.

15...0-0-0 16.♗f3 ♗g4

A very tempting attempt at simplification. As the game proceeded, I was under the impression that this was a positional blunder. After a closer look I changed my opinion to merely a 'bad practical decision'.

16...f5 was more solid, but after 17.♖he1 ♗f7 18.♗f2 as Sergey pointed out at the press conference, White keeps some pressure.



17.♗xd5!

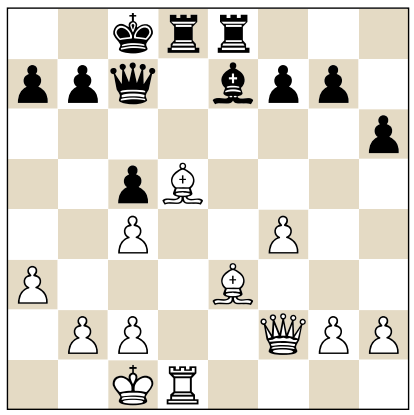
A brilliant positional sacrifice that would require some effort from the more materialistic amongst us and comes more natural to the romantics. 17.♕e2!? looks completely empty, but curiously enough, White can fight for a small something even here: 17...♗xf3 18.♕xf3 ♕c6 19.♖he1 ♗f6 20.♗f2 ♖d7 21.g4, opening a second front, and combined with the well protected but still slightly weak d5-pawn, Black is still under some pressure.

17.♕xd5 would play into Black's hand. After 17...♕xd5 18.♖xd5 ♗xf3 19.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20.gxf3 ♖d5 Black has full compensation for the pawn. White's extra queenside pawn is close to worthless, and his kingside is ruined.

17...♗xd1 18.♖xd1 ♕c7

Preparing a regrouping, ...♖ge8 and ...♗f6.

19.c4 ♖ge8 20.♕f2



20...b6

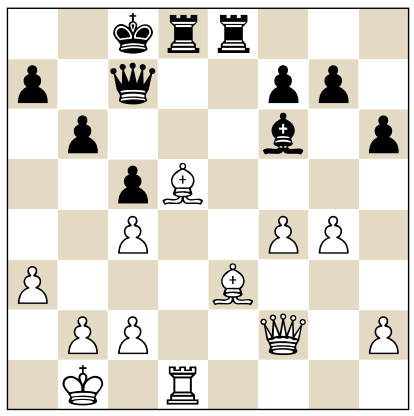
This works because Black is just in time to arrange counterplay along the e-file with ...♗f6, but it was also possible to play the positional ...f5 first: 20...f5!? 21.♖d3 b6 22.♔b1 ♗f6. Here Black can set up a passive defence, when it will be very hard for White to find a way to break through. A decent plan for Black is to place his pawn on a5 and hide the king on a7. Still, White is the one having easier play. For now, h3-g4 is a way to open a second front, while a well-timed b4 can turn out to be nasty as well.

21.g4!?

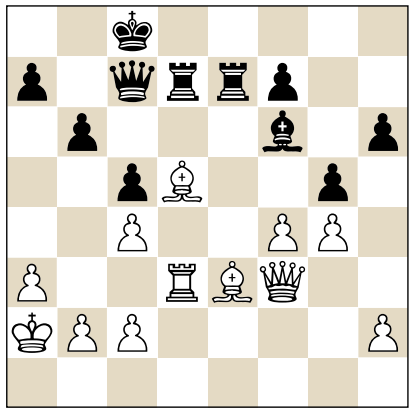
Using the opportunity to grab space on the kingside.

After 21.♖d3 ♗f6 22.♔b1 ♕e7 23.♕f3 would prevent the brilliant tactic that Sergey allowed in the game.

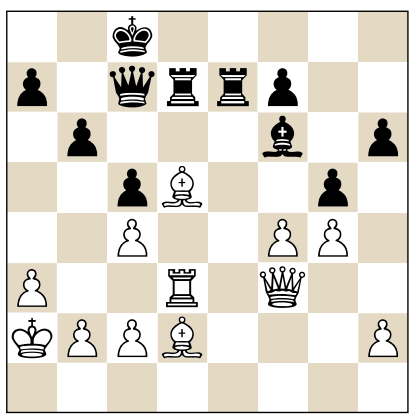
21...♗f6 22.♔b1



22...♖d7?
This is where things went south in this game. Fabi should have exploited White's minimal lack of coordination with 22...♕e7!, and now, after 23.♖d3 (clearly the move Sergey was counting on), 23...b5! 24.g5 bxc4 25.gxf6 gxf6 gives Black excellent counterplay.
23.♖d3
Black's problems are of a strategic nature. With White pushing on the kingside, Black's passive defence is pretty much doomed to failure. He has to create some concrete play, but concrete play, as we know, can sometimes be good and sometimes bad.
23...g5? This is counterproductive. Eventually White will regroup and target the weak h6-pawn.
23...♗d4 was a better shot, but the position after 24.♗xd4 cxd4 25.♕xd4 is extremely unpleasant.
24.♔a2 ♖ee7 25.♕f3



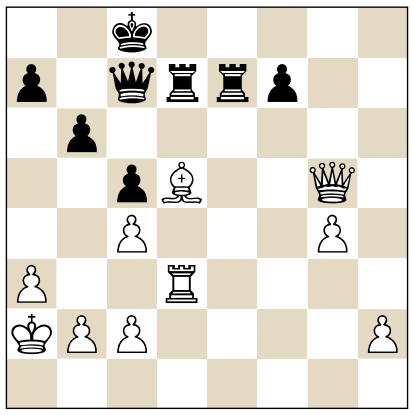
25...♔d8 25...♖xe3 26.♖xe3 ♕xf4 27.♕e2 leaves Black with the classic scenario of unequally strong opposite-coloured bishops. White will shut the diagonal with c2-c3 and Black's gaping h1-a8 diagonal ensures he is completely lost.
26.♗d2 ♔c8



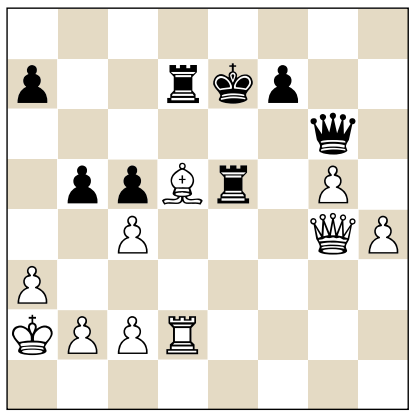
MARIA EMELIANOVA

Sergey Karjakin had a disastrous start, but the Russian kept fighting and after a sensational win in Round 12 over Fabiano Caruana, he was suddenly at the top of the table again.

27.♕f1! Preparing ♖h3. Curiously enough, with the bishop on d5, the king on c8 and the wide open h1-a8 diagonal, you would expect White to win with some kind of mating battery, but since he controls the entire board, the decisive blow comes on the kingside. Black loses a pawn and with it the full house.
27...♖d6 There was no defence against ♖h3, but now White simply wins the g5-pawn.
28.fxg5 ♗xg5 29.♗xg5 hxg5 30.♕f5+ ♖dd7 31.♕xg5



The rest is easy. Black has nothing to offer in return for White's domination. His king is still potentially weak and White has the easy plan of just pushing forward the h-pawn.
31...♕e5 32.♕h6 ♔d8
32...f6 is a little more tenacious, but White should convert without much trouble, starting with 33.h4.
33.g5 ♕d6 34.♕h8+ ♖e8 35.♕h4 ♕g6 36.♕g4 ♖e5 37.h4 ♔e7 38.♖d2 b5 This break comes far too late. Now pretty much anything wins, but White forces a simple and completely winning endgame.



39.♗xf7!? ♕f5 40.♖xd7+ ♔xd7 41.♕xf5+ ♖xf5 42.g6 ♔e7 43.cxb5
White has far more pawns and complete control.
43...♖h5 44.c4 ♖xh4 45.a4 ♖g4 46.a5 ♔d6 47.a6 ♔c7 48.♔b3
Black resigned. The black king has to keep the b6-break in check, so White can slowly but surely walk his king all the way up the board to support the eventual g6-g7-g8 finale.

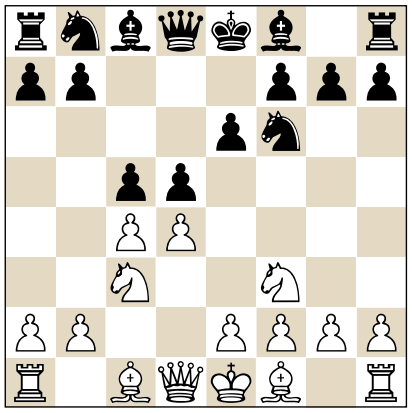
■ ■ ■

Caruana was not the only player to lose in Round 12; co-leader Mamedyarov also bit the dust. In the press conference, the Azeri admitted that he had been under the impression that, playing the white pieces, he couldn't possibly lose to Ding Liren, who so far had drawn all his 11 games. A careless underestimation of the Chinese number one, who now suddenly became a contender as well, at least in theory.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

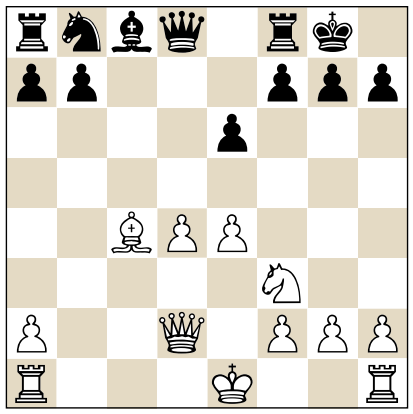
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Ding Liren
Berlin 2018 (12)
Queen's Gambit Declined, Semi-Tarrasch

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 c5



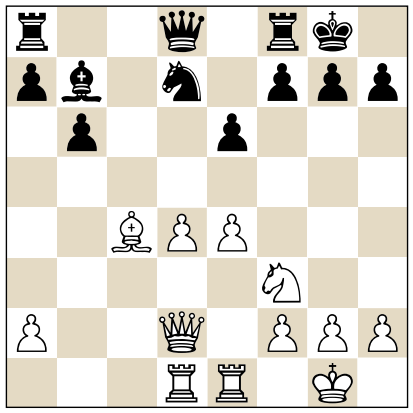
Ding, who has lately been relying on the Semi-Slav, had very likely lost faith in this opening after being caught out by Grischuk in the sharp Anti-Moscow. Although I am sure he will eventually sort things out, for the rest of this tournament he probably promised his coach to play something more solid. The Semi-Tarrasch is a frequent guest in the games of Kramnik and Dominguez, but also of Wei Yi, who was seconding Ding. Ding himself also has some experience with it.

5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♗b4+ 9.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 10.♕xd2 0-0 11.♗c4



So far both players followed the established theory. Here the old way to develop the pieces was to bring the knight out to c6, but people have long realized that with the knight eventually ending up on a5, the thematic breakthrough d5! ...exd5 e5! is pretty dangerous. The modern way is to develop the knight to d7, closer to the kingside.

11...♘d7 12.0-0 b6 13.♖ad1 ♗b7 14.♖fe1



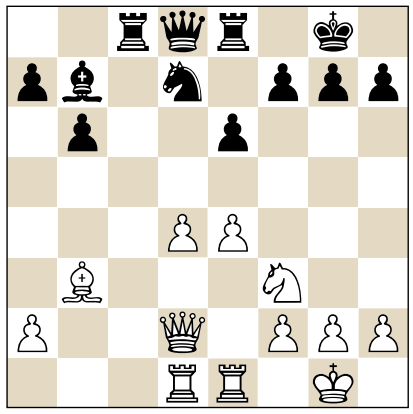
Early attempts with d5 have been tried in various versions by Levon Aronian. This, however, is one of the most traditional ways to play this variation: rooks to the centre.

One other well-known plan is a4-a5 with the rook on a1, but lately Black seems to have gotten that under control, mostly due to the fact that the engines have shown that the pawn sortie is not as dangerous as previous engines have been showing. So romantic.

14...♖c8 15.♗b3

Obviously 15.♗d3 is an alternative. The bishop has its pluses and minuses on both crucial diagonals.

15...♖e8 A fashionable preparatory move, since the immediate 15...♘f6 is met solidly by 16.d5. Alternatives are 15...h6 and 15...♕f6, but as the position is not all that forced yet, here and on the next move, both sides have plenty of options and subtleties.



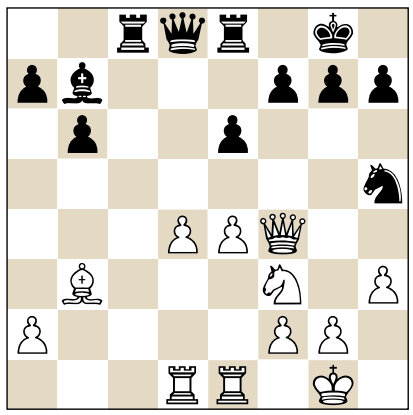
16.h3

Wesley So tried 16.♖e3 ♘f6 17.♕d3 against Dominguez in their match in November last year. The rook on e3 is reasonably harmoniously placed, but if White chooses to postpone the thematic d5-break, the position becomes very subtle and philosophical.

16.d5 immediately is possible as well, but seeing that Kramnik had allowed it at the very same Candidates tournament and Wesley had not gone for it, it probably means that things are not so simple here.

16...♘f6 17.♕f4 Just a few rounds before this game, So and Kramnik had gone down the same path.

17...♘h5



Kramnik's novelty. Black is fishing for move repetition, and if White chooses to refuse, he will have to send his queen to a passive square.

18.♕h2 h6

Curiously, there are some cases in the Semi-Tarrasch in which ...h7-h6 is the most useful move, and this seems to be one of those cases.

19.♘e5

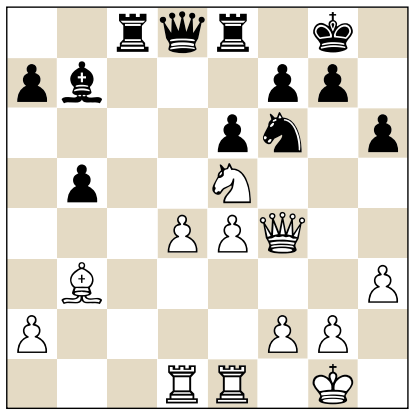
The first deviation from the aforementioned game.

19.d5 exd5 20.exd5 (20.e5 is a typical pawn sacrifice that always has to be considered, especially when the knight is so misplaced) 20...♖xe1+ 21.♘xe1 ♕f6 22.♘d3 ♗a6 23.♕e5 ♗xd3 24.♕xh5 led to massive simplifications in So-Kramnik, with a position that appears pretty drawish.

19...♘f6 20.♕f4 b5

Black's choice of active plans is extremely limited, but this is certainly one of them.

As Ding Liren listens to interviewer Anastasiya Karlovich, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov is trying to come to terms with a defeat he had not imagined possible.



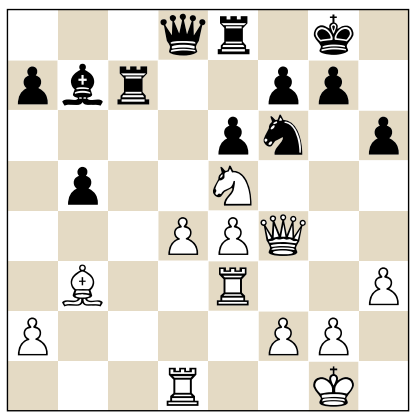
21.♖e3 White starts some intimidation, but without burning bridges yet. For now, ♖g3 appears to be a threat and d5 is in the air.

21.♘xf7 ♔xf7 22.e5 is a nice petite combinaison. White's main idea is to merely regain the sacrificed knight, which leads to simplifications, so Black can afford to make a useful move: 22...a5!, when it is hard for White to apply more pressure, since the threat of ...a4 is not so easy to meet.

22...g5? 23.♕f5! is something a 2770 player can miss when lying on the couch on a Sunday morning annotating the game, but not something a 2770 player should miss while playing in the Candidates.

21...♖c7

Protecting the f7-pawn and ready to meet ♖g3 with ...♘h5.



22.♘d3

Considering how things went from here on in, I feel this was the first step in the wrong direction. Sending the knight to c5 is very logical, but first of all it gives Black the opportunity to trade the threatening e3-rook, and secondly, the knight on c5 is largely hitting empty air.

22.d5 was very challenging, but after 22...exd5 23.exd5 ♕d6 24.♕g3, preparing the nasty ♘g4, Black appears to have a clean defence in 24...♖d8 25.♘g4 ♕xg3 26.♘xf6+ gxf6 27.♖xg3+ ♔f8, and an experienced player already sees the drawish contours of this position.

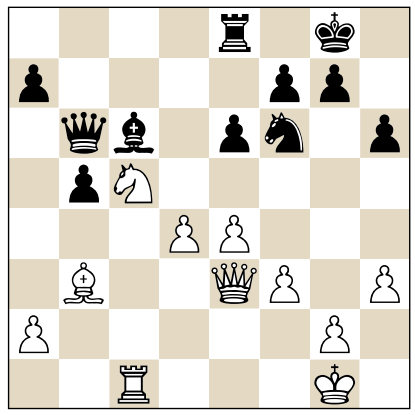
22...♖c3!?

Classy. Black uses the opportunity to trade the rooks. Very elegant.

23.♘c5

Both 23.d5 e5!? and 23.e5!? had to be considered, but the consequences are rather murky.

23...♖xe3 24.♕xe3 ♗c6 25.♖c1 ♕b6 26.f3



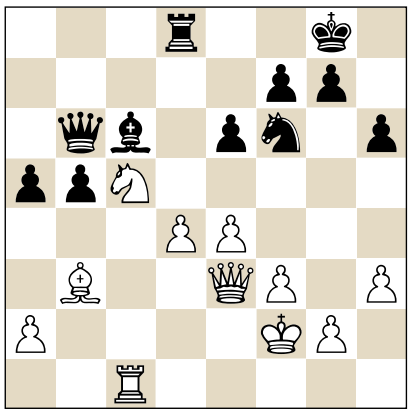
Somehow I don't like the look of this move here. At the very least, if you make it, you should probably forget about e5 and g4 and just focus on keeping control of the position in the centre and on the queenside.

26...♖d8

Black has nicely regrouped around the c5-knight and is ready to start his play on the queenside. That said, White's central control should still be enough to maintain the balance. For that, however, one should start feeling the danger, and as Shakh later

admitted, he didn't think he would lose to Ding, who so far had not won a single game in the tournament (nor had he lost any).

27.♔f2 a5



28.g4

White's play looks strange. It is possible to find a reason behind each move, but the combination of f3, ♔f2 and g4 had me thinking that Shakh could not decide whether he should play for a draw or for a win. Indeed, with the end approaching, his result of +2 was fine, but not yet thrilling. The position was pretty safe and the opponent (in Shakh's eyes) pretty innocent. At the same time, he was not ready to burn bridges and not decisive enough to go for g4!? or d5!? or e5!? at an earlier stage, when it was more appropriate. Here, finally, Shakhriyar's regrets of not having gone forward had taken hold of him, so he pushed... at the worst moment. Typical.

'Finally, Shakhriyar's regrets of not having gone forward had taken hold of him, so he pushed... at the worst moment.'

28.♘xe6 fxe6 29.♗xe6+ ♔f8 30.d5 could have been Shakh's idea, since the point behind ♔f2 is now revealed: 30...♕xe3+ 31.♔xe3 ♗d7!? 32.♗xd7 ♘xd7 33.♖c7 ♔e8 – White can't relax here, since Black has a potential passer, but it seems that objectively this endgame is fine for White. In fact, it is simply double-edged.

28.d5 exd5 29.♘e6 also forces an endgame, in which White is trying to hold from a position of weakness.

Finally, 28.a3 should help slowing down Black's counterplay. Black is very comfortable, but it seems still very early for him to claim any advantage here. He can choose between many ideas, the immediate ...a4-b4, ...♕b8 – flirting with the dark squares on the kingside – or just a neutral and useful move like ...♗e8.

28...a4 29.♗c2?!

After 29.♗d1! ♘d7 30.♘d3 White is still keeping his stuff together.

29...♘d7

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- What happened to Magnus Carlsen in the Dragon Sicilian vs Gawain Jones?
- Does White have anything after the annoying 5...♘f6 retreat in reply to 5.♘c3 in the Petroff?
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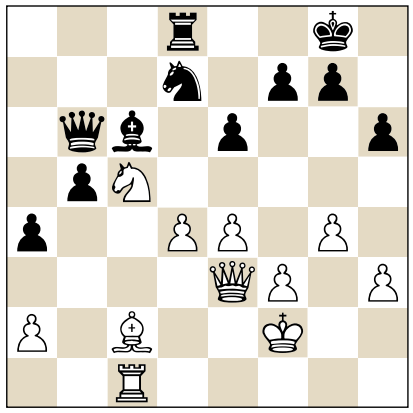
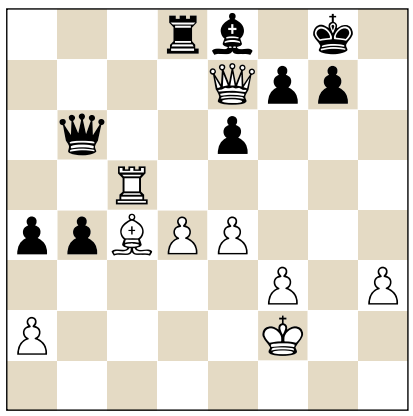
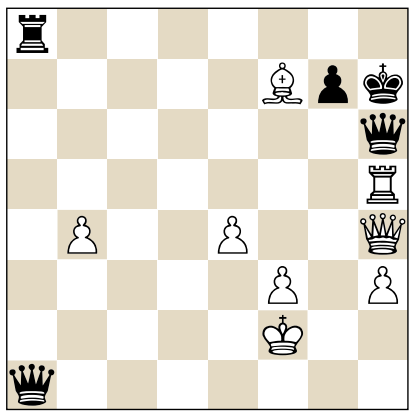


30.♗d3? Now Black can just push forward the b-pawn. The knight should have been kept alive.
30.♘d3 b4 can be met by 31.d5, and I don't actually see why Shakh refused to make this move.
30...♘xc5 31.♖xc5 b4 Defending this position is a thankless task.
32.♗c4 ♗d7 32...♗e8 was possible too: 33.d5 b3! 34.axb3 a3!, and Black is winning.
33.g5 hxg5 34.♕xg5 ♗e8 35.♕e7



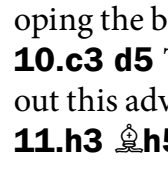
White's counterplay comes too late.
35...b3! 36.axb3 a3 37.b4 ♖a8 38.d5 a2 The most direct win, but there were more.
39.dxe6 a1♕ 40.exf7+ ♗xf7 41.♗xf7+ ♔h7 42.♕h4+ ♕h6 43.♖h5 When going for 38...a2, Black had to see a final detail here.



43...♕a7+! Picking up the f7-bishop. White resigned.
I cannot imagine how it must have felt for Ding Liren to win a game at the Candidates after drawing 11 in a row.

■ ■ ■

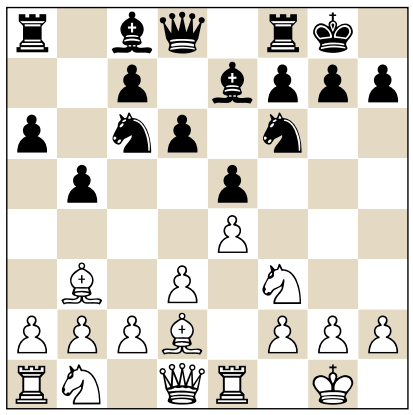
After his loss to Karjakin and a welcome rest day, Caruana showed character and resilience when he reclaimed the sole lead by beating Aronian in the next round. The American must have felt encouraged when his opponent walked straight into his preparation.



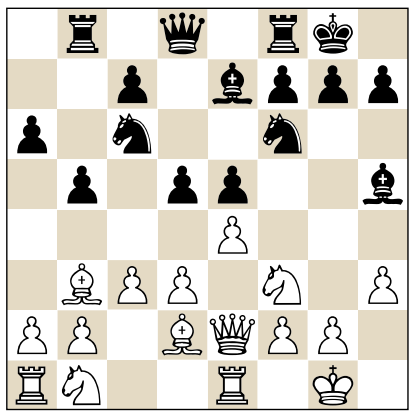
NOTES BY
Jan Timman

Fabiano Caruana
Levon Aronian
Berlin 2018 (13)
Ruy Lopez, Anti-Marshall Attack

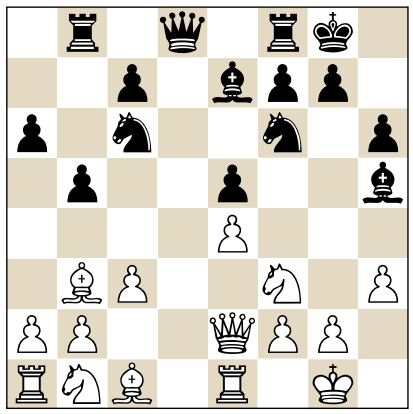
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.d3 d6 9.♗d2



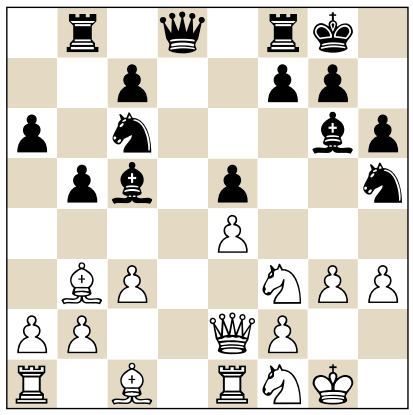
Grischuk had tried this cautious development move against Aronian two rounds earlier. During the press conference, Caruana observed that with such a move White cannot hope for an advantage, but that it did lend the position a peculiar character.
9...♗g4 Against Grischuk he played 9...♔h8, which looks strange. Developing the bishop makes more sense.
10.c3 d5 There is no reason to leave out this advance.
11.h3 ♗h5 12.♕e2 ♖b8
Probably a good move. Black is getting ready for the standard move a2-a4.



13.♗g5 dxe4 An interesting alternative 13...♗xf3 14.♕xf3 d4.
14.dxe4 h6 15.♗c1 Back to square one. Caruana said he had prepared up to this point. The position is equal, but easier to play for White.



15...♗g6 Aronian wants to take his knight to h5. An alternative was 15...♘a5 16.♗c2 ♕c8 to take the king's rook to d8.
16.♘bd2 ♘h5 17.♘f1 ♗c5 18.g3



18...♔h7 This kind of move shows that Aronian was not in the best of forms in Berlin. It is hard to imagine that Black will be able to effect the advance ...f7-f5. A solid move seemed

MARIA EMELIANOVA

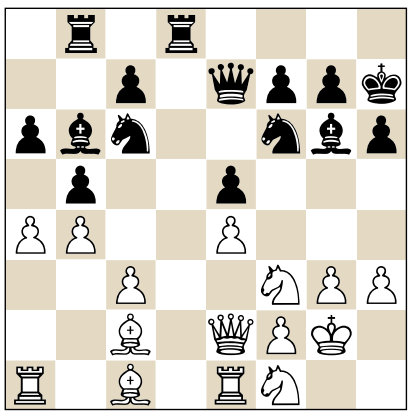
In Round 13, Fabiano Caruana reclaimed the lead by defeating Levon Aronian. Demonstrating good sportsmanship, the Armenian accepts his sixth loss with a smile and a firm handshake.

18...♘f6 to attack the e-pawn. After 19.♗c2 ♕c8 20.♔g2 ♖d8 White cannot boast an advantage.

19.♔g2 ♕e7 20.♗c2 ♖fd8 21.b4 ♗b6 22.a4 Black's hesitant play has allowed White to take the initiative on the queenside.

22...♘f6

This is a very sloppy retreat. Better was 22...♕e6 to protect the queen's knight. After 23.♘e3 White would be slightly better.



23.♘h4

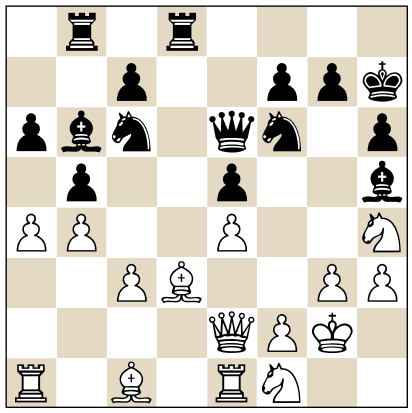
Caruana decides not to go for the pawn, saying afterwards that he wanted to keep everything under control in this important game. With 23.axb5 axb5 24.♕xb5 he could in principle have won a solid pawn, and the question of whether 24...♗xf2 will yield sufficient counter-chances is crucial. After 25.♕xc6 ♗xe1 26.♘xe1 ♖d6 27.♕c4 ♕e8 White must indeed be careful. Black is threatening to take his rook to c6, which is why White must provide extra cover for his e-pawn with 28.♘d2!. Black has insufficient compensation. 28...♖a8 is met by 29.♖b1. The text yields White a solid positional advantage, which justifies Caruana's choice.

23...♕e6 24.♗d3

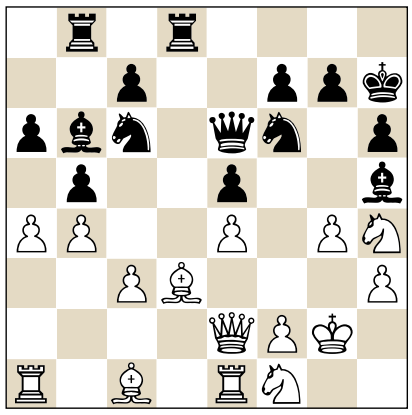
Increasing the pressure on the queenside. But exchanging on g6 first in order to restrict Black's counterplay would have been stronger.

24...♗h5

A wild attempt to create counterplay. Objectively better was 24...♕d7 25.♖d1 ♘e7 to keep the position ticking along. After 26.f3 White would be slightly better.



25.g4 Caruana picks up the gauntlet, despite his intention to keep everything manageable. He must have felt very sure of himself. But the complications arising now favour White less than it would seem. The alternative 25.f3 was objectively better, since it is not entirely clear how Black should solve his problems on the queenside.

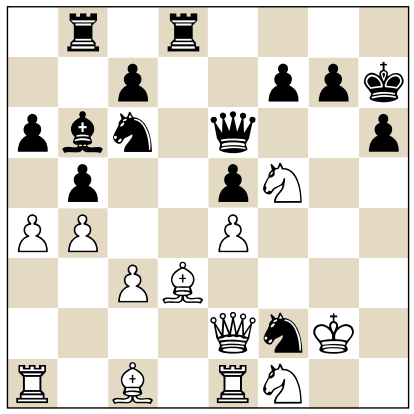


25...♗xg4! Aronian may not have been in the best of forms, but his intuition did not always let him down. The bishop sacrifice yields Black sufficient counter-play and is far stronger than 25...♘xg4 26.hxg4 ♗xg4, although White would have to be careful even here. After 27.f3 ♗h3+ 28.♔g3! ♘e7 29.♘e3 Black has insufficient compensation.

26.hxg4 ♘xg4 27.♘f5

The alternative 27.♗e3 was not entirely clear after 27...♘xe3+ 28.fxe3 ♖xd3! 29.♕xd3 ♕g4+ 30.♘g3 ♕xh4 31.♕d7 ♖d8! 32.♕xf7 ♖d2+ 33.♔f3 ♘e7, and Black's counterplay should not be underestimated.

27...♘xf2

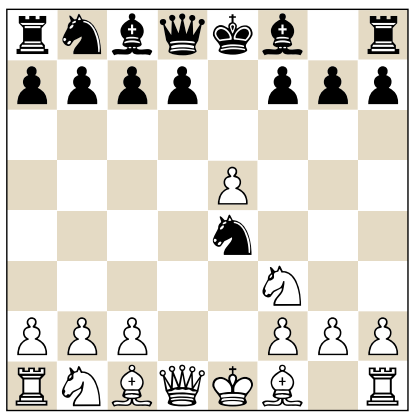


28.♗c2 It's almost invisible to the human eye, but the alternative 28.♗b1 would have been stronger. A game between top computers instead of top players would probably have continued as follows: 28...g6 29.♘1e3 gxf5 30.exf5 ♕f6 31.♕xf2 ♘xb4! 32.a5! ♗a7 33.♔f1 ♘d3 34.♘g4 ♗xf2 35.♘xf6+ ♔g7 36.♘h5+ ♔h8 37.♖d1 ♘xc1 38.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 39.♔xf2, and White has some winning chances, although with three

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

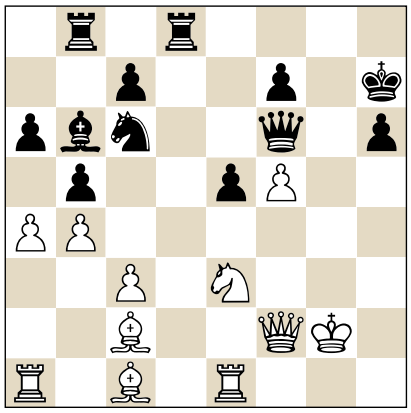
Alexander Grischuk
Fabiano Caruana
Berlin 2018 (14)
Petroff Defence, Steinitz Variation

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6
After having lost the previous must-not-lose game against Karjakin in the main line of the Petroff, I thought there was a high probability that Fabiano would switch his first line of defence, but the stubbornness of the American knows no bounds.
3.d4 ♘xe4 4.dxe5

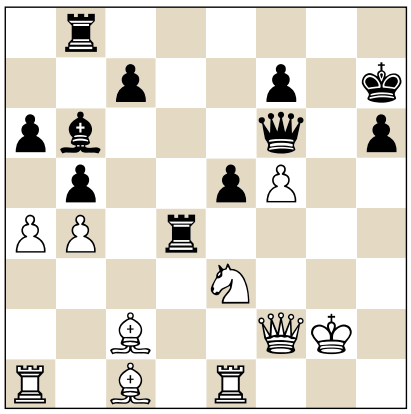


4...d5 4...♗c5 leads to fascinating variations. I once lost a painful rapid game with it, after having mixed up my analysis: 5.♗c4 ♘xf2 6.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 7.♕d5+ ♔g6 8.♕xc5 ♘xh1 9.♘c3 d6 10.♕c4 h6 11.♘d5 ♖f8 12.♕e4+ ♔f7 13.♗xh6!, etc. (1-0, 22) Almasi-Giri, Beijing blindfold rapid 2011. After that game, waiting for the elevator, I met Vugar Gashimov, who was always ready to cheer you up after a bad game. He told me 'come on' and said that I should have played 4...d5, because I am a solid boy. Fabiano is a solid boy, too.
5.♘bd2 The point of starting with 4.dxe5. 5.♗d3 could also be reached via the 4.♗d3 d5 5.dxe5 move order.
5...♘xd2
Back in the day, 5...♘c5 was considered a little more cunning.
6.♗xd2
6.♕xd2!? was Nepomniachtchi's favourite. Indeed, the idea of throwing the queen out to f4 at any point seems appealing, but no doubt both players

pawns for the piece, Black should be able to draw.
And if White had captured the knight on move 32? I will return to this question in a moment.
28...g6 29.♘1e3 Hemming in the black knight that has penetrated.
29...gxf5 30.exf5 ♕f6 31.♕xf2 The critical moment of the game. Caruana had 13 minutes left here; Aronian 11.



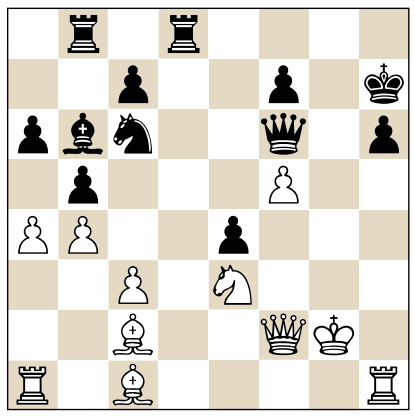
31...e4 Spectators following the game online saw that Black could have created sufficient counter-chances with 31...♘xb4!!, an amazing knight sac that the computer finds in relatively short order. During the press conference it became clear that neither player had considered it. Kasparov might actually have found the knight sac. Its point becomes clear after 32.cxb4 (forced now) 32...♖d4. Black has deployed both rooks in one fell swoop. The white king, which appeared to be fairly safe, suddenly finds itself in the crossfire of Black's major pieces. And the b6-bishop also plays an important part in the background. White is two pieces up, yet his position is anything but easy to defend, as witness:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 33.♔h3 ♕g5 34.f6+ ♔h8 35.♗d1 (protecting square h5) 35...♖g8 36.♘g2 ♖f4!! 37.♖xe5 ♖xf2 38.♗xg5 ♗d4! 39.♗h4, and White just manages to keep the balance. A spectacular variation;

B) 33.♗b2 (obvious, but now the white king will be forced up the board) 33...♕g5+ 34.♕g3 ♖d2+ 35.♔f3 ♕h5+ 36.♔e4 ♖g8, and to prevent a mating attack, White is forced to give up his queen with 37.♗d1 ♖xd1 38.♕xg8+ ♔xg8 39.♖axd1. Black can retain some advantage with 39...♕h4+ 40.♔d3 f6!. Variation A looks like the best option.
After the text, Black's position is basically hopeless. Opening the e-file and vacating square e5 hardly helps the black attack. I suspect that Aronian had become demoralized after all his setbacks and had more or less stopped believing in his chances.
32.♖h1



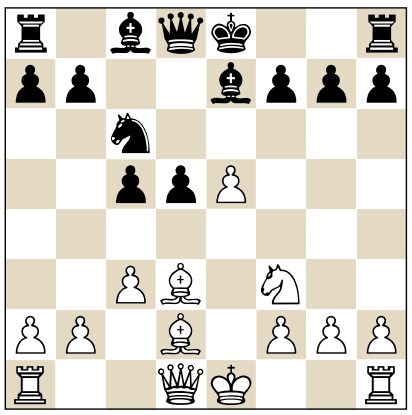
32...♖d6 Now 32...♘xb4 was no longer effective. Black is helpless after 33.♗xe4 ♘d3 34.♕h4.
33.♗xe4 ♖g8+ 34.♔f1 ♘e5 35.♕f4 c6 36.axb5 ♖g5 37.bxa6 ♕d8 38.f6+ ♘g6 39.♖xh6+
Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

Fabiano Caruana won the Candidates a full point ahead of Mamedyarov and Karjakin. Still, the last round was a nail-biter in which a lot happened, and the situation remained far from clear till the first time-control. Then the dust settled, because it became clear that the American was not only going to earn the right to challenge Magnus Carlsen, but was also *en route* to winning his final game.

had done their homework here as well.

6...♗e7 7.♗d3 c5 8.c3 ♘c6



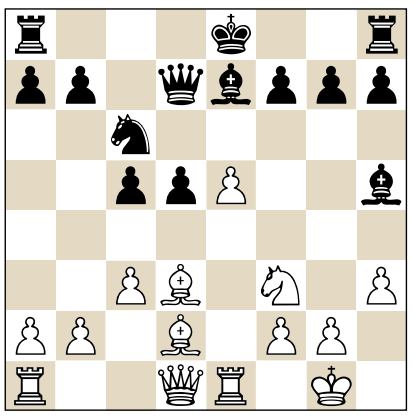
Somehow we made all the most natural moves, but reached a rather unexplored position. Here 9.h3 has been the most popular move and the natural castling is almost a novelty.

9.0-0 ♗g4

Very natural, why else did they play h3? In fact, Grischuk started spending a lot of time from here on in.

10.♖e1 ♕d7 11.h3 ♗h5

11...♗f5 was played in Vallejo-Garcia, Spain 2009.



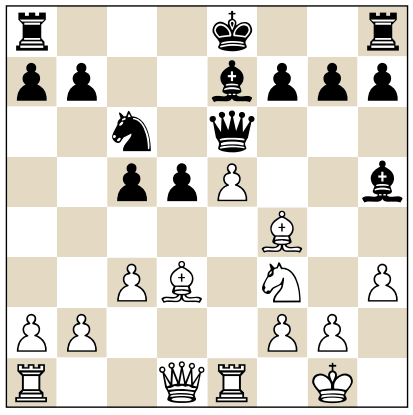
12.♗f4

Tempting was 12.b4!?, but after 12...cxb4 13.cxb4 0-0 it is not immediately clear how to regroup properly. White can get access to the d4-square, but the annoying pin stops him from taking control of it. Perhaps 14.g4!? is called for, but then things get more complicated.

14.♕b1 is also possible, but Black seems fine in the ensuing complications: 14...♗xf3 15.♗xh7+ ♔h8 16.♗f5 ♕c7 17.gxf3 g6 18.♗c2 ♘xe5.

12...♕e6!?

12...0-0 is met solidly by 13.♕c2!, whereas the tempting ...♘d8-♘e6 manoeuvre hits on some e6! tactics: 12...♘d8?! 13.g4 ♘e6 (13...♗g6 14.e6! ♘xe6 15.♘e5, and White crushes through, since a check from the a4-e8 diagonal will be deadly) 14.gxh5 ♘xf4 15.e6!, and this mess does not look safe for Black. The text-move, preparing ...0-0 and ...♗g6, is natural and good.



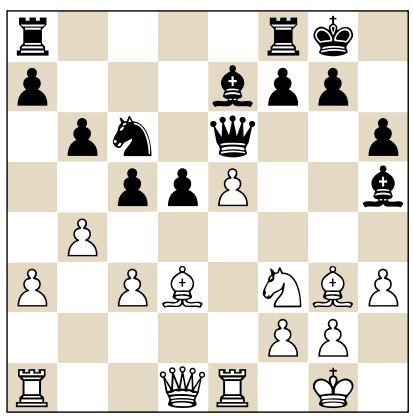
13.a3

The plan with b4 is positional, but since Black is not forced to give up control of the key d4-square, it is not too threatening.

13.♗e2! is my computer's advice and it is not rocket science; it merely wants to unpin: 13...0-0 14.♕d2, and now ♘d4 is not necessarily a killing threat, but at least it is more sensible than in the game.

13...0-0 14.b4 h6 15.♗g3 b6

15...♖ad8! seems stronger. I don't see the need to go ...b6, as bxc5 can be met by ...♗xc5.



16.♘d4?

White's position out of the opening didn't look all that great, but this transforms a level and unclear position into a very bad one for White. It is an absolutely non-Grischuk decision and a very, very rare case in which his excellent (and I absolutely mean this) strategic understanding lets him down. Most likely Alexander just collapsed after a very long and nerve-racking struggle to stay in contention and didn't come to this game with enough energy.

16.♗e2 was still an excellent idea. White has his own trumps in this structure and the ♘d4 shot is on the cards here.

16...♗xd1 17.♘xe6 fxe6 18.♖axd1

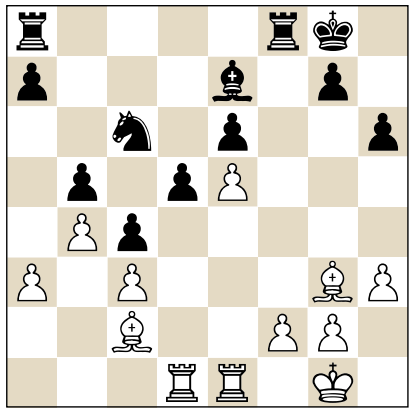
18.♖exd1 was a better version, but then Fabi doesn't have to push ...b5:

Berlin 2018

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	2784	USA	* *	½ ½	½ 0	½ ½	1 ½	½ 1	1 ½	1 1	9	2885
2	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	2809	AZE	½ ½	* *	1 ½	½ 0	1 ½	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	8	2829
3	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	2763	RUS	½ 1	0 ½	* *	½ ½	½ 1	½ ½	1 ½	0 1	8	2836
4	Ding Liren	IGM	2769	CHN	½ ½	½ 1	½ ½	* *	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	7½	2806
5	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	2800	RUS	0 ½	0 ½	½ 0	½ ½	* *	1 0	½ ½	1 1	6½	2766
6	Alexander Grischuk	IGM	2767	RUS	½ 0	½ 0	½ ½	½ ½	0 1	* *	1 ½	½ ½	6½	2770
7	Wesley So	IGM	2799	USA	0 ½	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	* *	1 ½	6	2737
8	Levon Aronian	IGM	2794	ARM	0 0	½ ½	1 0	½ ½	0 0	½ ½	0 ½	* *	4½	2662

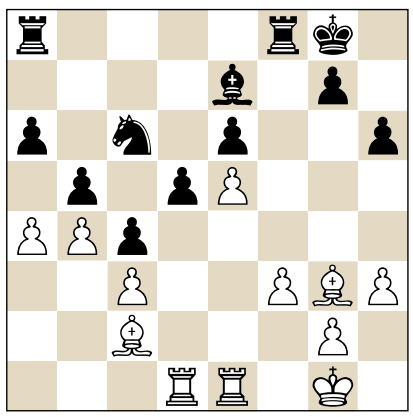
18...c4 19.♗c2 ♗g5!, and Black is slightly better. It is simply that his pawn structure is very desirable, as long as White doesn't get the f4-g4-f5-pawns rolling.

18...c4 19.♗c2 b5!



I am pretty familiar with these pawn structures, since they can arise from the Open Spanish, an opening both Fabiano and I have studied a great deal. Here White's position is completely toothless and Black can choose when to break through with ...d4 or just crush through with a sacrifice on b4. It is also interesting to compare this position with a bad endgame that could theoretically appear from the Chebanenko Slav (1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 a6 5.e3 b5 6.c5). The sac on b5 is a motif there as well.

20.a4 a6 21.f3



21...♗g5!?

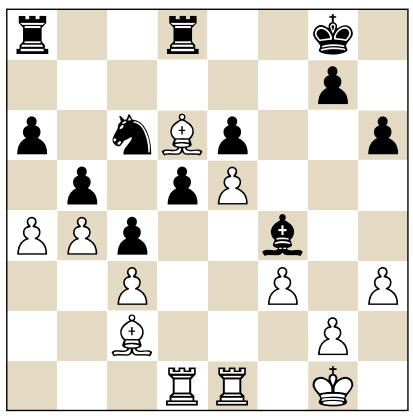
A very clean way to maintain the pressure without getting involved in any complications.

But 21...♘xb4! 22.cxb4 ♗xb4 23.♖e2 ♗e7 looks very promising for Black, when a likely scenario is that White will try to give the c2-bishop for the b- and c-pawns. Not a happy defence ahead.

22.♗f2? White has already lost the struggle on the queenside and in the centre. The bishop pair is irrelevant and his only hope is to get his kingside going.

After 22.h4! ♗f4 23.♗xf4 ♖xf4 24.h5 White would get some potential for counterplay, as his kingside pawn structure has got a beautiful makeover. Black will probably break through with ...d4 as fast as possible before White prepares g3 and f4. Then White should manage to weather the storm with simplifications: 24...♖c8 25.♗g6 d4 26.axb5 axb5 27.cxd4. Black can take either pawn and he is pushing, but with accurate defending and a good bishop on e4, White can hold this together.

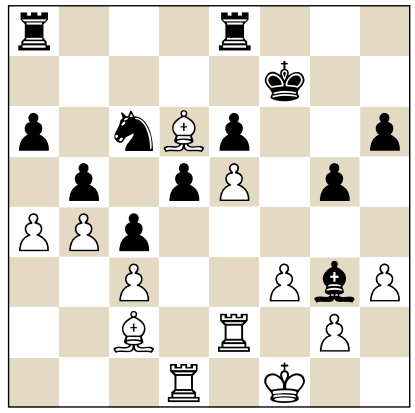
22...♗f4 23.♗c5 ♖fd8 24.♗d6



Mission accomplished. Fabiano Caruana and his second Rustam Kasimdzhanov know that they can start preparing for Magnus Carlsen, but first they are happy to pose with official commentator Judit Polgar to promote her Global Chess Festival.

24...♗g3! The bishop on d6 serves a sad defensive purpose, and with this beautiful bishop manoeuvre, Black places it on a very beautiful and vital square, from where it attacks e5, covers the e1-square, but most importantly, totally devaluates White's kingside pawns. This position looks strategically lost for White. Black can push ...g5, ...h5-h4 to fix it even further and then eventually break through with ...d4, with or without sacrificing on d6.

25.♖e2 g5 26.♔f1 ♔f7 27.♗c7 ♖e8 28.♗d6



28...♖ac8

Everything is good, but since it's not yet clear how to arrange the rooks, it was possible to start with fixing the kingside even further: 28...h5 29.♖a1 h4.

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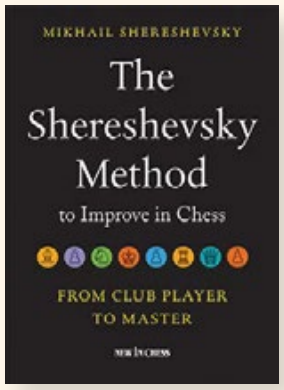

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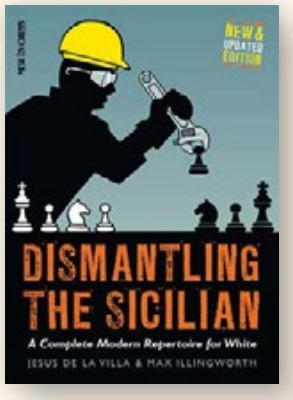
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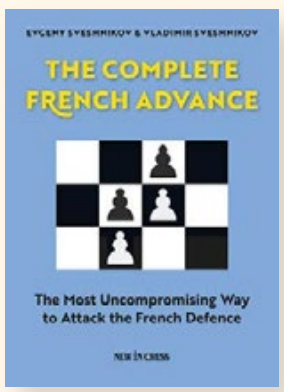

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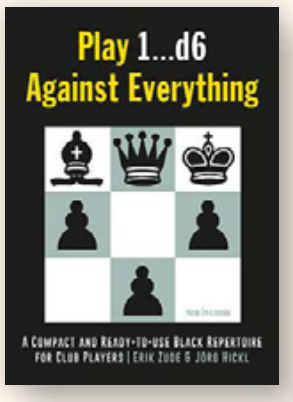

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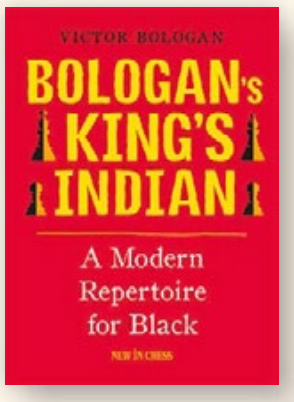

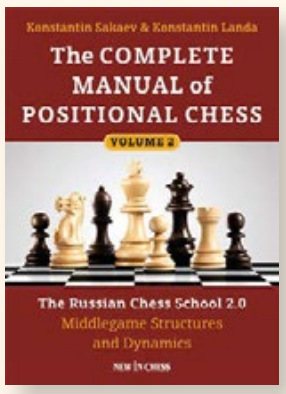
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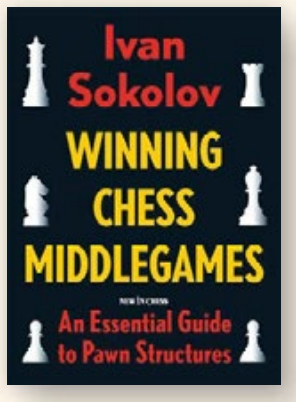

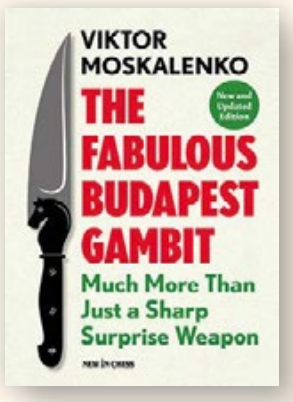

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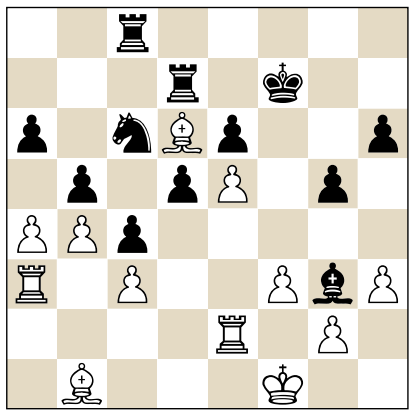
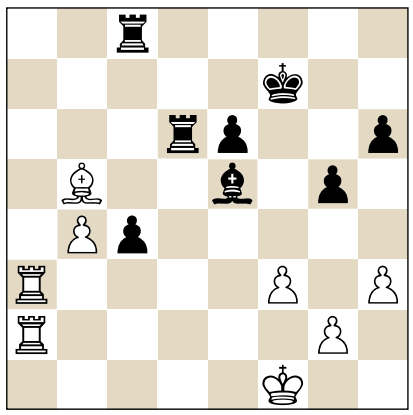
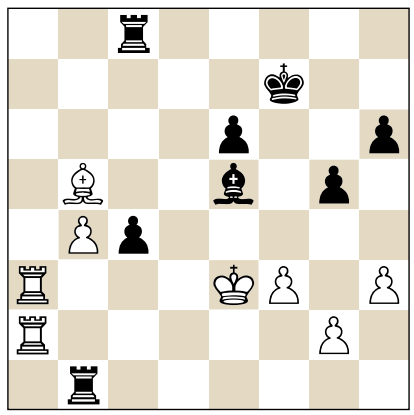
29.♖a1 ♖ed8 30.♗b1 ♖d7 31.♖a3
31.axb5 axb5 32.♖a6 was called for. At least White prevents ...d4 for now.



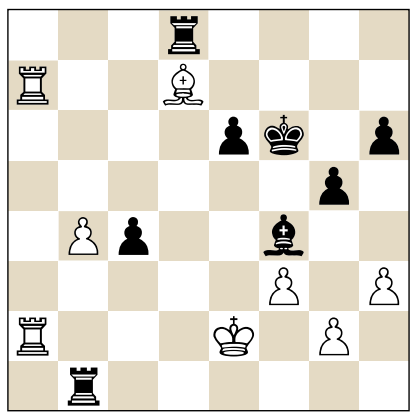
31...d4!? A well-timed push. The position transforms into a very unpleasant opposite-coloured bishop endgame for White. Some minor drawish tendencies could not scare Fabiano, who by this point would not be unhappy with a draw. As his rivals had both failed in their winning attempts, a draw would yield him the desired date with the World Champion, who I imagine could easily get nervous watching his future opponent play this one out with an iron hand.
32.axb5 axb5 33.cxd4 ♘xd4 34.♖ea2 ♘c6 35.♗e4 ♗xe5 36.♗xc6 ♖xd6 37.♗xb5



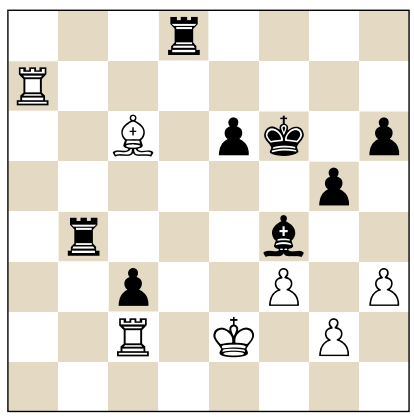
The position looks rather drawish at first, but it soon transpires that the strong passer, combined with a very uncomfortable white king, will be enough for Black's victory.
37...♖d1+ 38.♔e2 ♖g1 39.♔e3 ♖b1
Perfectly natural, but it allows White to trade a pair of rooks. After 39...c3!, with four rooks on the board, White would be unable to defend his king.



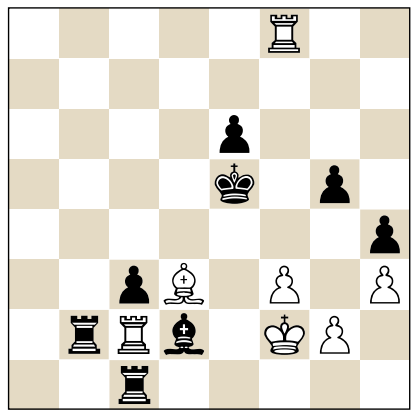
40.♖a7+?
A useless check to make move 40. 40.♖a8! was the path to salvation: 40...♖xa8 41.♖xa8 ♖xb4 42.♗a4, and White will have to suffer endlessly, with no guarantee that he will hold, but it was still the best chance. It's a typical 50/50 case here.
40...♔f6 41.♗d7 ♗f4+ 42.♔e2 ♖d8



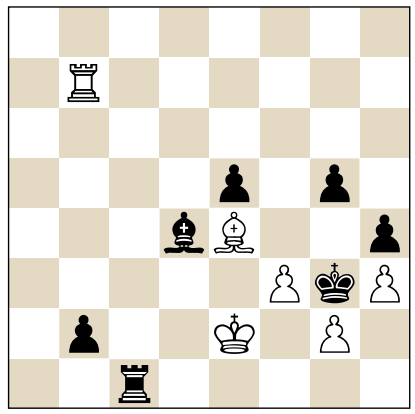
The b4-pawn has to fall. White is unable to stay coordinated and protect the pawn at the same time.
43.♖c2
Or 43.b5 c3 44.♖c2 ♖b2, and wins.
43...♖xb4 44.♗c6 c3!



Actually, the rest was pretty straightforward. Black can shuffle rooks around, creating threats to the white king as well as trying to break down the c2-square blockade. If all of this is not enough, there is the reserve plan of sending the king to g3.
45.♖d7 ♖c8 46.♗e4 h5!
From a weakness on h6, the pawn turns into a serious potential asset on h4.
47.♔d3 ♖b2 48.♔e2 h4 49.♖d1 ♔e5 50.♖a1 ♖d8 51.♖d1 ♖db8 52.♖a1 ♗d2 53.♖a6 ♖d8 54.♖c6 ♖b1 55.♔f2 ♖a1 56.♖c4 ♖d4 57.♖c8 ♖b4 58.♔e2 ♔f4 59.♔f2 ♖bb1 60.♖f8+ ♔e5 61.♗d3 ♖b2 62.♔e2 ♖e1+ 63.♔f2 ♖c1



Forcing the rook trade under favourable circumstances.
64.♖xb2 cxb2 65.♖b8 ♗c3 66.♗e4 ♗d4+ 67.♔e2 ♔f4
Finally the g2-pawn, the second weakness, falls.
68.♖b4 e5 69.♖b7 ♔g3



White resigned.
Not a bad final position to qualify for the match with. Black is in complete control. ■

Interview Fabiano Caruana

With his goal in sight, his nerves got the better of him. Suddenly he lost a game, and victory in the Candidates tournament was threatening to slip through his fingers. Time to show his true mettle. Fabiano Caruana kicked himself, went to see *The Shape of Water* and bounced back with two final wins to earn the right to challenge Magnus Carlsen for the world title. The next day, the American Challenger looked back on his greatest success to date in an interview with

‘I took pretty much all my chances’

DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM.

When I meet Fabiano Caruana at the Scandic Hotel in the centre of Berlin, which has been his home for three weeks, he looks calm as always. He must be very pleased, thrilled, perhaps still jumping for joy inside, but if so, he doesn’t show it. Sure, he was happy to have a small celebration with some friends last night, but nothing extravagant. And no, he didn’t go to sleep at a crazy hour. Also because he had to get up in time to start a long session of interviews.

In fact, now that he has won the Candidates tournament, something that he had wanted so much, he doesn’t look very different from how he looked when I talked to him two years ago after he had finished second in the Moscow Candidates after a last-round loss to Sergey Karjakin. There I suggested that he must be devastated, a suggestion he laconically denied, saying he was fine and that there would be a next time. As we sit down in a quiet corner of the restaurant on the third floor of the Scandic, I remind him of that conversation and tell him that I still can’t believe that at that point he was so laid-back.

‘Yeah, I was a little bit more laid-back last time. This time I really wanted to win it, and I almost felt as if I was putting too much pressure on myself at some point. Although if I had not won, there would still have been a next time. It’s not as if my career would be over.’

What did you do after Moscow? Make a structured plan to reach the world title match in 2018? Let’s do everything right now?

‘No, I can’t say I did everything right. I made a lot of mistakes. It was important that it was the second time, which is always very different. It’s like, take Ding Liren, who played so well here, but should have pushed a bit more. Next time he will probably have that extra push and maybe that

‘It probably helps that I have been beaten down so many times in my chess career that I am ready to get hit again.’

LENNART OOTES

will take him to the top. You just never know. It's always a slightly different feeling at your first time, when you kind of cannot fully believe that you are able to win it. Maybe that was what happened last time. I did everything right, I fought as well as I could, but in a few critical moments I just didn't have what it takes. This time I guess I did. I missed, I'd say, one big chance, against Ding Liren, but otherwise I took pretty much all my chances. I was much more experienced than two years ago. I was a relatively experienced player at the top back then, but now I had two extra years and a lot of failures and a lot of successes as well. And recently I had been playing well, been feeling good about my chess. I had two very important victories at the end of last year. OK, then Wijk aan Zee was a terrible tournament, but that happens sometimes. Every once in a while, you have a disaster where you get a huge minus score and you can't do anything right, but it didn't really affect my play here.'

It's tempting to believe that you were hiding in Wijk aan Zee...
'(Immediately) No, I wasn't hiding anything. Things just didn't go right from the start, and at that point you lose motivation, especially in a long tournament like Wijk aan Zee.'

You weren't staying away from certain openings?
'Not really. I mean, to be honest I didn't even know what I would prepare at that point, and I had some slightly chaotic preparation before Berlin. I played some stuff here which was probably not the most dangerous prep of all time. Queen b3 in all the lines of the Catalan. But still it kind of worked perfectly, because I won one game at the start with it and then almost another. I certainly wasn't hiding prep in Wijk aan Zee, and I didn't want to do badly. But I quickly forgot about it. I don't know, I thought there is a main challenge. OK, it wasn't great, but two years ago, I did very well in Wijk and that didn't mean that I won the Candidates. Karjakin did very poorly in Wijk that year and he won the Candidates. It doesn't really mean anything.'

What were the main changes in your life over the past two years?
'I went through some relationships since, like, 2016. That, I would say, is the main thing. And I also went through some business changes. Lawrence Trent was my manager, and of course I was very grateful for all the help he gave me, and that ended. Obviously I have a personal relationship with all the people I work with, so this is also part of my personal life. I was trying to find the right approach and my new manager was Rhonda Coleman. We worked together for a year, and then that ended and now I am being represented by two people, Eric Kuhn and Mehreen Malik, who are not really known in the chess world. They are very capable and very supportive. They have a lot of connections in the world, in terms of media, in terms of companies, clients, things like that. They are trying their best to get my name out there and see what they can do. And I think they are doing a good job. I mean, I also hope that I maybe helped their job a bit (laughs) with this tournament.'

I remember that a couple of years ago, people around you urged you to be more active on social platforms, and I thought, but that's not Fabiano. I couldn't see you tweet every day... And you didn't.
'I still don't. Sometimes I feel the urge to tweet something. At some point, I had this social media company that was handling my social media accounts, but it didn't quite work out. Also because they messed a few things up (laughs) and posted things which weren't quite true or which were just flat-out mistakes. Like once they said my favourite song was *Kashmir* (by Led Zeppelin), but they spelled it Cashmere. And then I got so many messages telling me how it should be spelled. But now I handle all the stuff myself, which is nice. Also, I took a break during this tournament, because my phone account had a devastating life-ending glitch. So I was phoneless for the last month and a half, which was actually a good thing. But when I get home I will get myself a new phone.'

If Kashmir is your favourite Led Zeppelin song, I'd like to know your numbers two and three.
'I am not even sure it's my favourite. I'd probably put *Achilles' Last Stand* up there. But *Kashmir* is definitely up there, too. And the third one, I don't really know, maybe *Black Dog*. I like some of their earlier stuff too, like *Good Times, Bad Times*.'

We talked about your disappointing result in Wijk aan Zee. What did you do in the month between Wijk aan Zee and Berlin?
'First I went home for about 10 days. I was alone, I tried to get into good shape. Because obviously after a tournament you are not in the best physical shape and you're also tired. I tried to regain my energy. And then I went to Miami, where I was joined by Rustam (Kasimdzhanov), obviously, and also by Cristian Chirila and Leinier Dominguez for the entirety of it. We worked together, and near the end Alejandro Ramirez came for three, four days and he also helped out. We kind of chilled out and worked on chess for a good part of 15, 16 days. It was nice. Miami in February is actually the place to be.'

That was at the place that you have there?
'No, no, my place was rented out, so we just rented an Airbnb. An older house, but a very large one, perfect, and we could go to the beach. We had plenty of room even for five people.'

Several of them are from St. Louis, where you are living now. Do you have a contract with the Club or with Rex Sinquefield...
'I don't think I can really say anything

about that. But the Club does support me in any way they can, and this is invaluable help.'

And the details you might divulge in the future...
'I don't think so. I mean, the Saint Louis Chess Club is supportive of all American players and they are also equally supportive of me, so I also hope that I can make them proud, for instance with this tournament victory.'

Did you get a message from Rex Sinquefield?
'Actually, I haven't gotten an email from him. After I won London he sent me an email. But I have the feeling that I get a lot of text messages that I can't see, which is kind of an issue. So maybe once I get a new phone, I will be able to check them all.'

When you came here, you were ready for a long battle. Did it help that you had been through such a long gruelling event before?
'Yeah, I was prepared for the same thing as last time; a very long fight in which you shouldn't try to go crazy from the start. We actually saw that players who did badly at the start, suddenly were in contention again. Like Sergey (Karjakin), who had the most disastrous start you could imagine and then led the tournament two rounds before the end. We have seen this on many occasions. I think some of my recent tournaments have helped me get ready for the tension and the stress of it. But the stress did get to me at some point, which resulted in a few poorly played games, especially this game against Sergey in Round 12, where I just got completely outplayed and beaten without a single chance. It was really critical that I pulled myself together after this loss.'

You are a fighter and you know that only the strong will survive. Is it also something you enjoy? (Seeing his hesitation) I mean, some people hate battles, some people love battles...
'I think if you are not ready for a fight you have no chance to win this tournament.'

But you should also enjoy the pain...
'Oh, I definitely don't enjoy the pain (laughs). But I am ready to forget about it and move on to the next game, which I guess is a very helpful quality. It probably helps that I have been beaten down so many times in my chess career that I am ready to get hit again. And I was hit in this tournament, obviously.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

'If you are not ready for a fight you have no chance to win this tournament.'

It's not every time that I recover from a loss, but this time I did it (in the last two rounds) and even more than I needed to. That was great. But I was helped a lot by some luck. That I got my prep against Levon (Aronian) in Round 13, that I won this game. Because otherwise I would have been in a must-win situation the final round and who knows I might have lost that game. But you need some luck to win the Candidates. I don't think you can do without. Magnus (starts laughing), when he won in London in 2013, had pretty much all the luck in the world. Only maybe Vishy (Anand) in 2014 kind of did it just through pure strength over his competitors alone. Although even there I can remember a few lucky moments.'

A key moment early on in the tournament was your game against Kramnik in Round 4, full of ups and downs, which gave you a boost and clearly affected him. How did you experience that rollercoaster?
'The thing was that I couldn't get too upset. At some point, I realized that I had messed up the position completely, but I didn't have time to think about it, because we already had a new position, which was complicated and where I had to fight. Then I made this ...h5 move, which was absolutely necessary and a very good practical chance. Probably my most important move of the game. And then I was winning, but it's not like it was automatic. At the end of the game, I made some good moves and that was necessary.'

Did you manage to keep your calm in that game?
'Not really. I mean, I can't say I kept my calm when I messed up a winning position. I was too low on time, and after the time-control I also wasn't sure, but at least I had more time than him; that was very important. At some point, I offered a draw, with a bad move, which was a strange decision, but probably what ultimately won me the game. Rustam really enjoyed this a lot. Me playing a bad move and then offering a draw. That's really something you don't see every day. Maybe if I had offered a draw with another move, he would have taken it, who knows. Although I have a feeling that Kramnik will not take a draw in any position these days.'

Most of the time when I was observing you here, you looked confident and calm. But then you tend to confuse me, as you once told me that you were different from other people. That others might hide their nervousness, but that when you look nervous you are not.
'But this time I was actually very nervous. For most of the tournament I wasn't, but I was very nervous before my game against Shakhriyar (Mamedyarov), and I think it showed in some

of my decisions at the start of the game. And against Kramnik, and obviously against Karjakin. In these three games my stress just hit a level that was unsustainable, and after I lost against Karjakin it relieved some of the stress somehow, which was necessary.'

This stress builds up before you go to the game...
'It's before the game, preparing the night before. Sometimes you struggle with sleep as well, which isn't great. Usually I have no problems sleeping during tournaments, but around this period I was waking up earlier than I normally do. This was a tough period in the tournament, probably the toughest. And it ended with a loss and for whatever reasons things got easier.'

What is it that you try to do to release the tension?
'You try your best, you try to go out, walk and enjoy the fresh air, watch a movie or play some video games, something to take your mind off chess, but there is always something in the back of your mind. It's a very useful skill to actually be able to forget about chess after the games, which I generally have, but sometimes it betrays me.'

After the loss in Round 12 against Karjakin, at the post-game press conference, you looked groggy, like a boxer who was suddenly hit by a blow he had not seen coming in a fight he believed to have under control.
'When we faced the time-trouble phase, I realized that I had landed in the most hopeless position that I could imagine. I also saw that Shakhriyar (Mamedyarov) had lost and I started wondering how all this could happen. Because all I needed was a draw and I would be a clear point in the lead and I could pretty much coast in my last two games.'

Essentially you lost one and a half points in that one game against Karjakin, because in case of a tie with him the tiebreak rules would favour him now.
'Yeah, the tiebreak was ruined by that loss... But also I would have been a point ahead, and if my last two games were drawn someone had to actually win both games on demand, which is a colossal task. So yeah, it was very unpleasant and I started wondering how I had managed to screw it all up so badly. I kicked myself for a few hours and then I managed to get to sleep and forget about it.'

The next day was a free day and you went to see The Shape of Water. Rather than go to an action-packed movie you went to a different world temporarily...
'Yeah, that was a good idea. Friends had been telling me about it months before, you have to see this, and I didn't get a chance. And we're here in the centre of Berlin and there is a movie theatre close by, so why not? It was also a really-well made film, so it gave me a good feeling and I could forget about everything for a couple of hours.'

One thing nobody could fail to notice in this Candidates tournament were the unbelievable fights, people throwing everything at each other. A more common strategy might have been for most players to proceed cautiously and to try and grab their chances to slowly build up a plus score. What was happening here?
'That's what I was trying; I was not going crazy or anything. But what can you do when you're playing Kramnik? The game takes an unexpected turn, no matter what.'

Maybe you were trying that approach, but there were various players that weren't. There was such mayhem, how do you explain that?
'Well, players play according to their style. I don't think you can tell a player to play calmly, quietly. If it's going against his style it's not going to be good for him. So Kramnik plays the way he feels he needs to. It's his approach to chess these days and it's just as legitimate as...'

I didn't feel Aronian was playing the way he was playing in previous tournaments.
'Levon is such an enterprising player and sometimes it works out beautifully and sometimes it doesn't. But he also made some bad decisions. His decision to play 1.e4 against Kramnik was a critically awful decision. I think he will agree. Because if he had played a normal game, it could have been a very different tournament for him.'

What did you think when you saw 1.e4 on his board?
'I was surprised and I remembered that he played 1.e4 against Karjakin in the last round of the Candidates 2014 and it didn't work out for him. Well, he was actually better in that game, so I shouldn't say it didn't work out for him, but he still lost. He is not a natural e4-player, and I thought the line was just strange. He prepared poorly and he ran into, like, the only line in which Black can actually mate White in this opening. And Kramnik was probably shocked that he actually got a chance to use it. And against Levon, of all people.'

Levon Aronian was one of the top favourites, perhaps the top favourite for many people, and he finishes last. Is there any explanation for that or is it just the cruelty of sport?
'I really don't know what went wrong with his play; only he can say that. He was definitely the best player last year in terms of his results. Obviously, Magnus is always consistently good, great even, but Levon won so many tournaments that you cannot say he was not the best player of 2017. It's just bad luck that he comes to this, the most important tournament, not in the same form as he came to, let's say, the World Cup or Norway Chess or any of the tournaments he won last year. But he probably also made some bad decisions. He was fighting, but the thing is, you can either fight or try and limit the damage and you'll end up in fifth place or whatever and it will be one of those unremarkable, bad tournaments.'

Is that the secret of this tournament, that it doesn't make any sense to lick your wounds?
'It doesn't actually make a difference if you're second or if you're in last place. Well, it makes some difference, you don't want to have a bad tournament, no matter what. But he tried and it could have worked out. We saw it almost worked out for Sergey (Karjakin). He tried and he had some luck against Wesley (So), and suddenly he was back in the race. And maybe Levon, with some luck, would have been back in the race too. But instead of having some luck he was just having one bad game after another.'

After your loss to Karjakin in Round 12 you bounced back against Aronian, who walked straight into your prep. That win must have given you a huge boost.
'Yeah, because I suddenly didn't have to win the last round. I didn't have to go out of my way to win. After a draw I definitely would have had to play for a win. I didn't want to repeat the situation of last time, when I had to play an opening that I hate, one that leads to a bad position out of the opening, which I have to first not lose, try to equalize and then try to outplay my opponent. Which is not a pleasant feeling from the start. This way I could just play a normal game. And if somehow I didn't win and Sergey or Shakhriyar found a way to win, that would be bad luck, but it happens. I thought my chances if I drew my last game were going to be very good.'

That was your mind-set before the final round. But once you sat down, it may have been slightly different. To what extent were you following the other games, in which there was so much going on? Players on who you had to count were maybe not spending their time cleverly, taking risks at strange moments...
'I thought that Ding wouldn't lose (against Karjakin), especially after his ...h3. Then I thought he was going to win. I was wondering how Sergey was going to survive this position. I walked by their board right before he played ...h3, and I started wondering, why not ...h3? And Ding also looked confused, and after he played it Sergey started shaking his head, so I figured that he had blundered. It was a bad blunder; he was kind of lucky that it didn't totally spoil his position. So I was only worried at that point about Kramnik's game (against Mamedyarov). Not because I thought he had a bad position, but because anything can happen. He is very ambitious, he is down a pawn, he has a very attractive position, so he could easily push too hard. But then I was in my own time-trouble, didn't see his game, and after move 40 I saw it and it was a draw, so I was happy (smiles).'

MARIA EMELIANOVA

'I kicked myself for a few hours and then I managed to get to sleep and forget about it.'

At the start of our talk I said that I had the feeling that this tournament began for you at the end of the Candidates tournament in Moscow. Here, when you were playing the final part of your game against Grischuk and you could have offered a draw but decided to play on, I was thinking that I was witnessing the beginning of the match against Carlsen. You knew that in this position Magnus would never ever consider offering a draw and neither would you.
'I know Magnus wouldn't consider it, but that wasn't really what I was thinking about. I think if you give this position to Levon or Sergey, Nakamura... I mean, if it's very complicated, then I understand, OK, take a draw and play safe. But the opponent has no counterplay, you have a pawn, the bishop pair, everything is protected, and I am winning. So I saw no risk and I also thought, if I can win the game, I have an obligation to win it. But it's not supposed to be a statement to Magnus or anything.'

Your analysis is quite clinical and makes sense, but it cannot be a coincidence that when I was talking to Judit Polgar after the game, it turned out we had had exactly the same idea. Oh yeah, this is about Magnus. But you don't think it was.
'No, I just thought it was about the position. I don't think anyone could have criticized me if I took the draw, because at the end of the day rating points don't matter, the win will be forgotten and the tournament is really all that matters. But still I think, if you have a winning position and you consider yourself a good player, then you should try to win it. If you're not ready to win a position like that, then why are you here?'

Well, maybe Magnus was not on your mind then, but last night when you were trying to get to sleep, was he on your mind?
'No, I didn't think about him at all (laughs). When I prepare for the match, obviously I will, but this has just finished. When I start preparing for the match very seriously, obviously he will be on my mind, but before that...'

You mean there were entirely different things on your mind last night....
'No, mainly I wanted to sleep. I was exhausted after yesterday.' ■

Judit Polgar

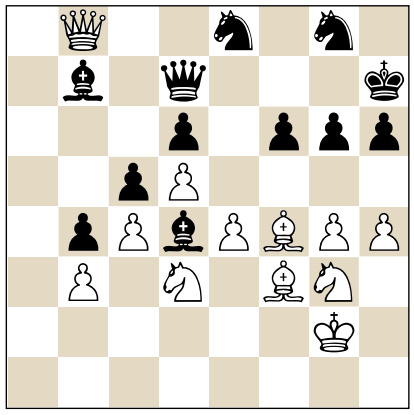
Strategic beauty

Beauty in chess is often connected with dashing sacrifices or unexpected tactical twists and turns. But **JUDIT POLGAR** shows that breaking with preconceived strategic rules can be beautiful, too.

Positional play and strategic thinking tend to be associated with dogmatic views that require that one should always act according to generally accepted and fixed rules. When a player sidesteps these rules and offers his own, personal interpretation of a strategic theme, we can speak about originality. Or, even though strategy is generally regarded as 'dry', about beauty.

Six months after he became World Champion by defeating Tigran Petrosian, Boris Spassky played a game that was considered by many as illustrative of his style. Botvinnik once stated that Spassky was the first truly universal player in history, and although this may have been an exaggeration, there was no doubt about his original and harmonious play, which featured a perfect combination of the diametrically opposed elements of tactics and strategy.

Boris Spassky
Jonathan Penrose
Palma de Mallorca 1969



In the above position, White's advantage is beyond doubt, but due to the blocked structure Black may hope to defend his fortress. According to the rules, White should undermine Black's control of e5 with g4-g5, but 33.g5 fxg5 34.hxg5 ♗c8 offers Black too much counterplay. Therefore Spassky went for the paradoxical:

33.h5!?

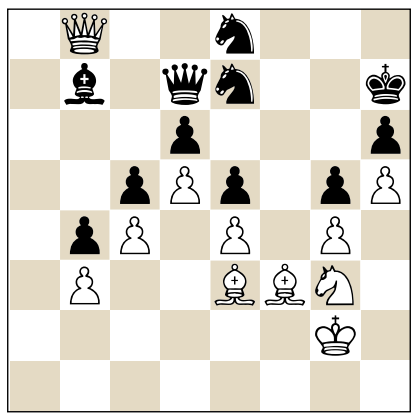
'Spassky's play featured a perfect combination of the diametrically opposed elements of tactics and strategy.'

This secures the f5-square for his knight, but allows Black to block the position completely.

33...g5 34.♗d2 ♗e5

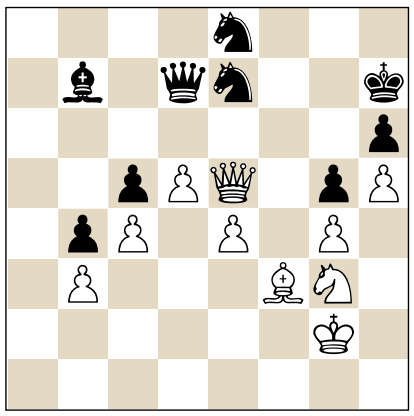
This may seem premature, but after ♘e2 Black would have to play it anyway. With such a passive black position it is not clear how White could use this tempo, as in the next phase Black will mainly play ...♘g8-e7-g8. Apart from all this, Black may have been afraid of the thematic break e4-e5, clearing the e4-square for White's minor pieces.

35.♗e3 ♘e7 36.♘xe5 fxe5



With all his pawns blocked on dark squares, Black has got rid of his 'bad' bishop, but precisely this makes his structure vulnerable, since his knights cannot reach g6, f7 or d7 to consolidate the central squares. In addition,

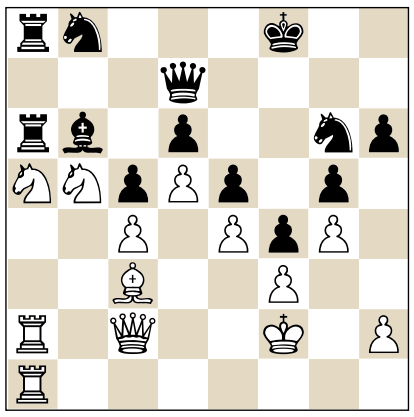
the b7-bishop can hardly be considered 'good', as its mobility is strongly reduced.
All these factors allow White an elegant sacrificial solution to the strategic plot.
37.♗xc5! dxc5 38.♕xe5
With a minimum of white accuracy Black will be crushed by the central pawns. None of his minor pieces is able to put up resistance.



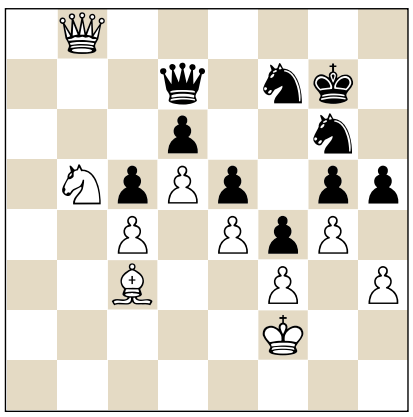
38...♘g8 38...♕d6 39.♕a1 does not bring any relief. **39.♕b8 ♘ef6 40.♘f5 ♘e7 41.♘xh6 ♘exd5 42.cxd5 ♔xh6 43.♕f8+ ♕g7 44.♕xc5 ♘d7 45.♕d6+ ♔h7 46.e5 ♔h8 47.h6 ♕h7 48.e6 ♕c2+ 49.♔g3** 1-0.

A beautiful game by Spassky, but it so happened that, decades later, he found himself on the other side of the barricade in a similar situation.

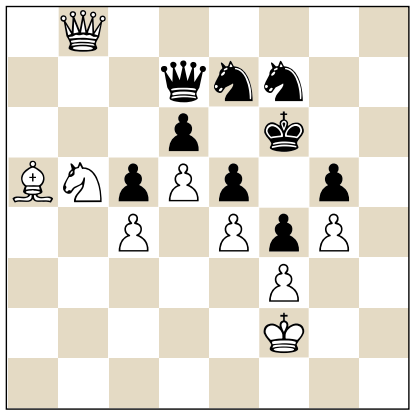
Judit Polgar
Boris Spassky
Budapest 1993 (4th match game)



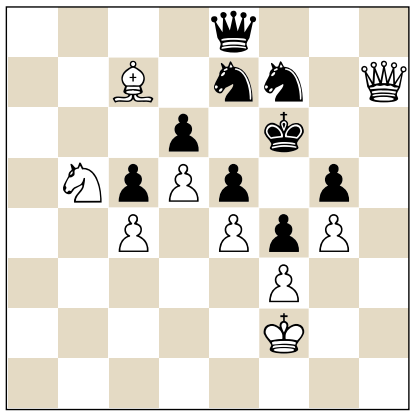
I had reached the first control with clear domination and now found a forced way to penetrate with the queen:
41.♘c6! ♖xa2 42.♖xa2 ♖xa2 43.♕xa2 ♘xc6 44.♕a8+ ♘d8 45.♕b8! The key to my manoeuvre.
45...h5!?
While in the previous game h4-h5 froze the kingside, this similar move now prepares to open it with a later knight sacrifice on g4.
Keeping the extra piece would not have been in Spassky's style: 45...♕b7 46.♕xd6+ ♔g7 (but not 46...♔f7? 47.♕xd8! ♗xd8 48.♘d6+, with an extra pawn and an overwhelming positional advantage) 47.♗xe5+ ♘xe5 48.♕xe5+ ♔g8 (the only move that does not allow immediate tactics) 49.♕f6, threatening ♕xh6 and e4-e5 and casting Spassky in the undesirable Penrose part from the previous game.
46.♕xb6 ♘f7 Black has no time for counterplay: 46...hxg4? 47.♘xd6 gxf3 48.♘f5! ♔f7 49.♗a5, winning a knight.
47.♕b8+ ♔g7 48.h3



Black's chances to hold seem much better than in the previous game. He has no passive light-squared bishop and his knights safely defend d6 and e5, protecting him against the dreaded positional sacrifice. But on the other hand, White has more queenside space, allowing me to penetrate with all my pieces, including the king!
48...hxg4
Spassky perfectly understood that 48...h4 would spare me the trouble connected with ...♘h4 and ...♘h6xg4, allowing the plan based on 49.♔e2 ♔f6 50.♗a5 ♘e7 51.♔d3 ♘c8 52.♔c3, when Black could hardly resist on the queenside. But the pawn exchange helps me to clear the h3-square, which will eliminate the risk of a perpetual based on ...♕a4 in the decisive phase.
Black could not have avoided taking a kingside decision for too long, for instance: 48...♔f6 49.♗a5 ♘e7 50.♕f8 ♘g6 51.♕g8 ♘e7 52.♕h7.
49.hxg4 ♔f6 50.♗a5 ♘e7



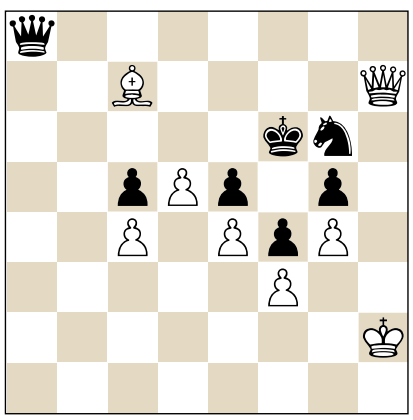
51.♕f8! Probably the only winning move, preventing Black from isolating my queen from the kingside with ...♘c8. After the neutral 51.♗c7? Black could probably have saved the game: 51...♘c8 52.♔e2 (there is no other constructive plan) 52...♔e7 53.♔d3 ♘h6 54.♔c3 ♘f7 55.♔b3 ♘h6 56.♔a4 ♘xg4! 57.fxg4 f3. The f-pawn has become unstoppable and White already needs to start looking for perpetual check.
51...♘g6 52.♕g8 ♘e7 53.♕h7
My domination is impressive, but a key element is the missing black bishop, which leaves his structure vulnerable, the same as in the previous game.
53...♕e8 54.♗c7



54...♕a8
Spassky must have had enough of playing 'against himself' and decides to launch a desperate counterattack.
Passive defending would most likely not have saved him either: 54...♕d7 55.♔g2 ♘c8 56.♔g1 (the king is heading for d3, starting with a small triangle

aimed at catching Black on the wrong foot. 56.♕g8 ♘e7 57.♕f8, hoping for 57...♘c8? 58.♗a5, followed by the decisive 59.♘c7, runs into 57...♘g6 58.♕b8 ♔e7, and Black is still alive) 56...♘e7 57.♔f2 ♘c8 58.♔e2 ♘e7 59.♔d3 ♘c8 60.♕f5+! ♕xf5 61.exf5 (the king's presence in the centre is essential to neutralize the break ...e5-e4) 61...♔e7 62.♗a5 ♔f6 63.♘c3 ♔e7 64.♘e4 ♔e8 65.f6 ♔d7 66.♘f2, and the king marches in with decisive effect.

55.♘xd6 ♘xd6 56.♗xd6 ♕a2+ 57.♔g1 ♕a1+ 58.♔h2 ♘g6 59.♗c7 ♕a8 During the game I noticed that 59...♘e7 would set an amusing trap: 60.♗d8? ♕h1+! 61.♔xh1, with a draw by stalemate. Unfortunately for Black, 60.♗xe5+, followed by 61.♕h8+, wins the queen.



60.♗xe5+!

Humanly speaking, the simplest way.

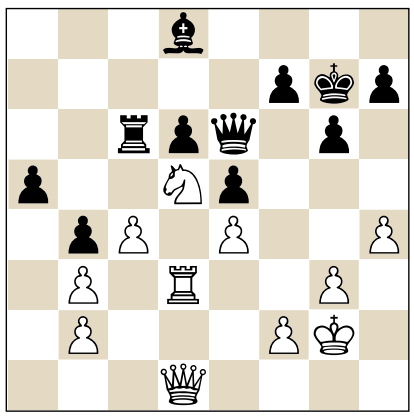
60...♘xe5 Or, if 60...♔xe5, 61.♕g7+ ♔d6 62.♕xg6+ wins. **61.♕f5+ ♔g7 62.♕xe5+ ♔g6 63.♕f5+ ♔h6 64.♕f6+ ♔h7 65.♕f7+** In view of 65...♔h8 66.♕h5+ ♔g7 67.♕xg5+ Boris resigned.

What both examined games have in common is the relative badness of the 'bad' bishop. Instead of freeing Black's position, its exchange for a knight only offered White additional tactical ideas.

In the next game, the bad bishop will be there all the way, but my winning plan will be original in a different way.

The best evaluation of the position below that I can give is that I would be disappointed not to win such a fantastic position.

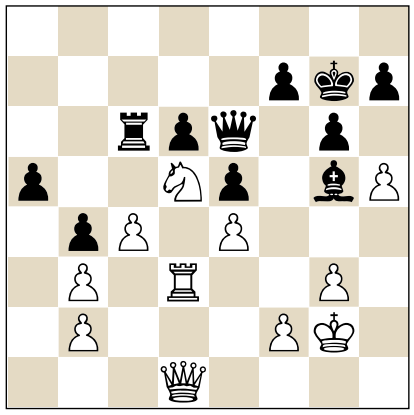
Judit Polgar
Vishy Anand
Wijk aan Zee 1998



The main difference with other Sicilian bad-bishop positions is that the queenside is frozen. This deprives White of the plan based on b4-b5, but it also means that Black has more pawns on dark squares than usual.

The logical conclusion based on these aspects is that White could and should break in the centre with c4-c5 and/or f2-f4, as if absolving Black from the bad-bishop issue. We will see later why this is effective, but for the time being the plan needs to be prepared.

36.h5 ♗g5



37.♕f3!

The start of a long regrouping aimed at creating threats along the h-file. This is essential in order to provoke ...fxg6.

37...♖c8 38.♖d1 ♖c6 39.♕e2 ♖c8 40.♖h1 ♔g8 41.f3 ♖b8 42.♕f2 ♖b7 43.hxg6! fxg6

Black needs to make this structural concession and expose his king after the inevitable opening of the centre.

If 43...hxg6 then 44.♕g1, followed by ♕h2, with a decisive attack.

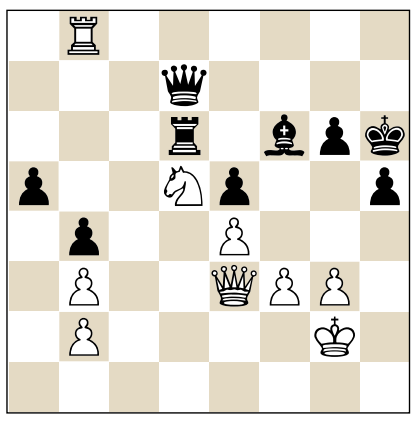
44.c5! Everything is prepared now for the main plan.

44...dxc5 45.♕xc5 ♗d8

Due to the a5- and b4-pawns the bishop can still be regarded as 'bad' while the king feels insecure after the recent pawn exchanges. In the next phase, I will increase my pressure until I play the last paradoxical (and decisive) pawn move, f3-f4. Both players were guilty of small moments of hesitation, but this doesn't change the character of the position or the validity of the plan.

46.♖c1 ♔f7 47.♕e3 ♔g7 48.♖c4! ♖d7 49.♕c1 Setting up the optimal battery with the queen behind the rook.

49...h5 50.♖c6 ♖d6 51.♖c8 ♕d7 52.♕c5 ♔h6 53.♖b8 ♗f6 54.♕e3+



54...♗g5? This loses quickly, but renders the game more instructive from the point of view of our main theme.

54...♔g7 would have prolonged the fight but not saved the game: 55.♖a8 ♕b5 (if 55...♕c6 56.♖a7+ ♖d7 57.♕b6 wins) 56.♘c7 (threatening 57.♘e8+) 56...♖d3 57.♕e2 ♕d7 58.♘d5, winning the a5-pawn.

55.f4! Bad pawns... defend the king, so this exchange is not as paradoxical as it looks. **55...exf4 56.♖h8+** And in view of 56...♔g7 57.♕d4+ ♗f6 58.♕xf6+ ♖xf6 59.♖h7+! ♔xh7 60.♘xf6+ ♔g7 61.♘xd7 Anand resigned.

Conclusions:

- Piece activity is essential even in blocked positions.
- Bad bishops sometimes defend good pawns, so their exchange may leave the pawn chain vulnerable.
- In positions with complete domination patience is essential. ■

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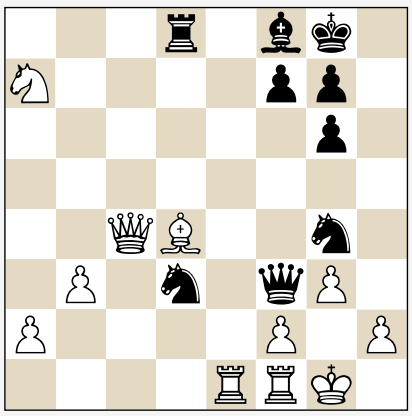
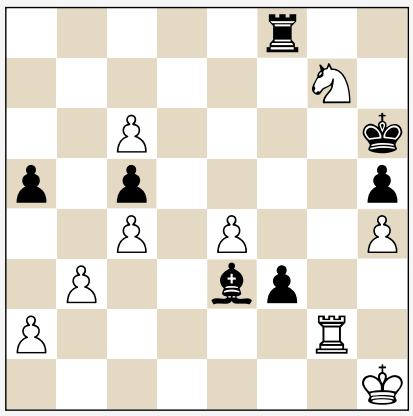
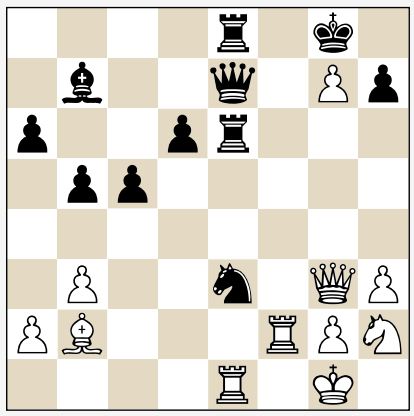
Solutions on page 71



1. Black to play



2. White to play



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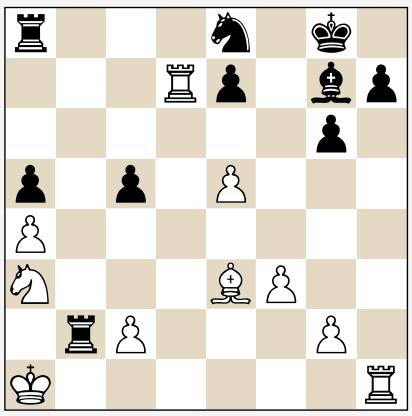
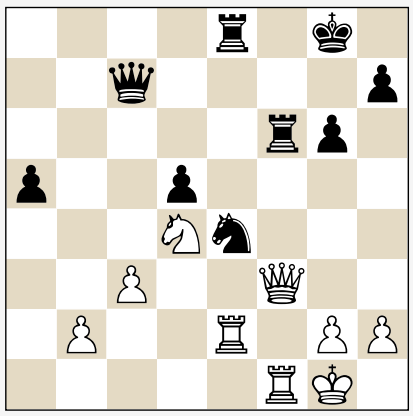
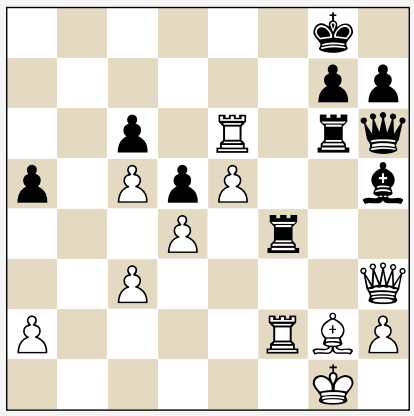


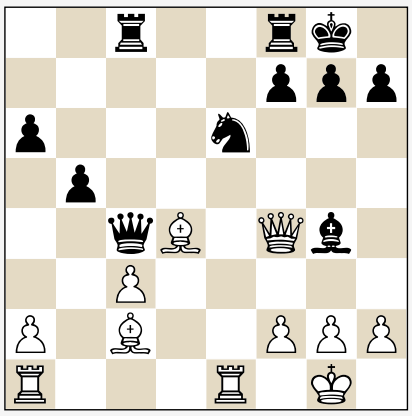
4. Black to play



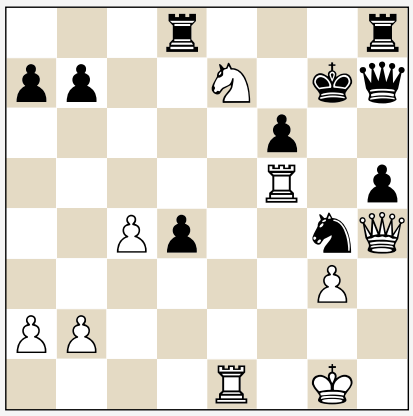
5. White to play



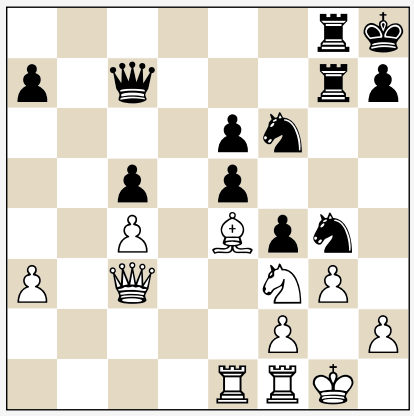
6. Black to play



7. White to play



8. White to play



9. Black to play

Louis Paulsen

The forgotten chess innovator

During his lifetime, Louis Paulsen (1833-1891) was regularly described as an unworldly eccentric. A silent man, tall, with a remarkably big head that drew the attention of both phrenologists and hat makers. In the early 1860s, he was one of the strongest, if not *the* strongest active chess player in the world. Nowadays, few people remember him, and if they do, it is mostly for the Paulsen Variation of the Sicilian. **HANS RENETTE** believes it is high time for a reappraisal and looks at the legacy of one of the chief pioneers of the modern school, whose ideas changed our game.

Some people become immortal by playing brilliant games, others find themselves on the other side of the medal. Lionel Kieseritzky, Curt von Bardeleben and Johann Hermann Bauer, if remembered at all, are mainly remembered as the losers of classic games against Adolf Anderssen, Wilhelm Steinitz and Emanuel Lasker. In a way, Louis Paulsen fits in with their company. Ask someone if they know a game played by Paulsen and if they do, there is a fair chance that they will refer to the game Paulsen-Morphy, played in the final of the first American Championship in New York in 1857.

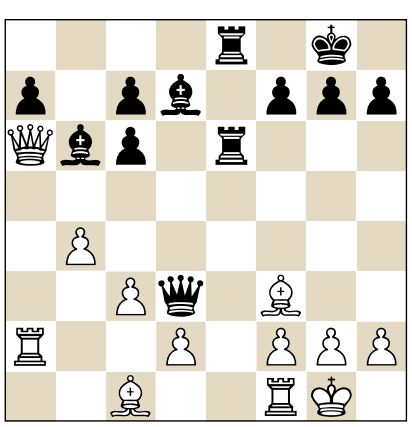
For those who do not know the game:

With his opening ideas Louis Paulsen was ahead of his time. Many contemporaries found his manoeuvres tedious and were not thrilled by his often excruciatingly slow play.

LIBRARY OF CLEVELAND

Louis Paulsen
Paul Morphy
New York 1857
Four Knights Opening

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗c5 5.0-0 0-0 6.♘xe5 ♖e8 7.♘xc6 dxc6 8.♗c4 b5 9.♗e2 ♘xe4 10.♘xe4 ♖xe4 11.♗f3 ♖e6 12.c3 ♕d3! 13.b4 ♗b6 14.a4 bxa4 15.♕xa4 ♗d7 16.♖a2 ♖ae8 17.♕a6



17...♕xf3 18.gxf3 ♖g6+ 19.♔h1 ♗h3 20.♖d1 ♗g2+ 21.♔g1 ♗xf3+ 22.♔f1 ♗g2+ 23.♔g1 ♗h3+ 24.♔h1 ♗xf2 25.♕f1 ♗xf1 26.♖xf1 ♖e2 27.♖a1 ♖h6 28.d4 ♗e3 0-1.

Kieseritzky, von Bardeleben and Bauer were strong chess masters and were amongst the best players of their time. The same is true for Paulsen – but he was a much more multi-faceted chess personality.

Studying openings

Louis Paulsen was born in 1833 at his family's estate of Nassengrund, near Blomberg, in Germany. At an early age his father taught him how to play chess, and he showed a significant talent for the game. In 1854, Louis followed his brother Ernst to the United States, where they settled in the Far West, in Dubuque, Iowa. In this rapidly growing trading settlement, Ernst founded a wholesale tobacco business for which Louis did the book-keeping. His fame as a chess player spread rapidly and he was invited to play in the first American chess congress held in New York in 1857. In the final, he was decisively beaten by Paul Morphy, 6-2, but Paulsen had shown his talent and above all impressed the world by his blindfold exhibitions. Remarkably, it was only after New York that he began to study opening theory, of which he had been fully unaware while playing Morphy.

After returning to Europe he continued to do so, now together with his other brother Wilfried, a minor master himself, as his sparring partner. In Europe Louis scored impressive results, and in the early 1860s he might be termed the strongest active player in the world, together with – or perhaps even ahead of – Adolf Anderssen. As the chess journalist Leopold Hoffer wrote: 'At that time Paulsen was at the zenith of his strength, and we have no hesitation in asserting that no then living master (perhaps not even Morphy) could have beaten him in a match.'

Frederick Edge, secretary of Paul Morphy, observed: 'Mr. Paulsen's game is steady and analytical to a nicety. Modelling his operations on profound acquaintance with Philidor, he makes as much out of his pawns as most others of their pieces. In reply to Mons. de Rivière, I once heard Morphy say, "Mr. Paulsen never makes an oversight; I sometimes do."'

The picture of thought and amiability

Despite his achievements in chess, Paulsen lived a quiet and uneventful life at Nassengrund, working as an accountant for the family estate. His brother Wilfried was a renowned potato farmer, while the corn liquor they produced, 'Alter Nassengrunder', also reached wide fame.

LIBRARY OF CLEVELAND

New York, 1857. Louis Paulsen and Paul Morphy at the board surrounded by participants and organizers of the First American Chess Congress. Standing in the middle (without beard) is a young Willard Fiske, who wrote the tournament book and edited *The Chess Monthly* from 1857 to 1861 with Morphy.

Louis Paulsen
a short timeline

1833, January 15: Born in Blomberg, Lippe, Germany.
1854: Moves to Dubuque, Iowa.
1857: Runner-up, behind Paul Morphy, at the first American Chess Congress in New York.
1859: Sets new blindfold record, taking it to ten boards.
1860: Attempts to play a match with Morphy fail. Returns to Europe, to his family's estate in Nassengrund, near Blomberg.
1861: First place in Bristol, beats Ignaz Kolisch in a match.
1862: Finishes second in London behind Adolf Anderssen; draws a match with him.
1864: Beats Max Lange and Gustav Neumann in a match.
1866: Narrowly survives an attack of jaundice.
1876-1880: Retains his unbeaten status in match play (a.o. beats Anderssen twice). Tournament victories in Leipzig, Frankfurt and Brunswick.
1886: Negotiations to play a world title match with Wilhelm Steinitz fall through.
1889: 4th-7th in his last tournament in Breslau.
1891, August 18: Dies in Nassengrund.

While Louis was active in the chess world, his remarkable achievements caused eye-witnesses to scrutinize his character and personality. One of the finest portraits of Paulsen comes from the hand of George Alcock MacDonnell, whose literary talent resulted in two books filled with anecdotes about his contemporaries. In 1862, at the London tournament, Paulsen and MacDonnell played a game. In his book *Knights and Kings of Chess*, published in 1894, MacDonnell gives the following description of the German master:

'Herr Louis Paulsen was a very simple-minded, unworldly-wise man, always absorbed in the work upon which he was engaged, and forgetful of everything else. Some years ago he visited Baden, and entered his name for the tourney there. He took lodgings for the first night, but not finding himself comfortable in them, resolved to change his quarters. Accordingly he started early next morning on a voyage of discovery; and, after inspecting many apartments, at last succeeded in obtaining what he thought would be a suitable lodging. He engaged it and told the attendant he would send in his portmanteau in the afternoon. "Oh!" said the girl, "your luggage is here. It is in one of the rooms on the opposite side of the house. Don't you know you slept here last night, and I gave you your breakfast this morning?" He had only wandered about the town in a circle, and was now returning to the house whence he had started.

'On another occasion – towards the end of a tournament game – an unmistakable draw – he pored and pored over the board until at last his opponent, seeing that the sand-glass was just running out, pointed to it, and asked him what he was thinking of, for that nothing could be done, the game being a draw by its nature. "Thinking of?" exclaimed Paulsen "why, if we draw, I have the move next game, and I was thinking what opening I should play." Then his glass ran out before the completion of the required number of moves, and the game was scored against him...

'Louis Paulsen looked, and I believe was, a very fine fellow. Tall and with a massive head, he was the picture of thought and amiability. He was very gentle in all his actions, and, though he seldom opened his lips, yet he was never wanting in kindliness or courtesy. In short, no foreign chess player was ever in this country more respected for his character or admired for his skill.'

There are plenty of descriptions of Paulsen's physique and the way he carried himself, most of them from the years that he gave his blindfold exhibitions. All of them are similar: Paulsen was a very calm and silent man, tall, with a remarkably big head that drew the attention of both phrenologists and hat makers.

Paulsen possessed a modest and reclusive character. He avoided attention and social events as much as he could. Behind the board Paulsen moved slowly and avoided any movements that might disturb his opponent. He is regularly described as an eccentric, as in this article of 12 August 1865 in *The New York Clipper*:

'You may be sure that when I (a correspondent of Hazeltine, living in Dubuque) came here (a year ago) I asked for Paulsen, hoping he might have returned from Europe. But they could only show me where he had been. "There was the corner where he sat and, blindfold, won of me and three others," said one, "There," said another, "was his cigar store where he used to play before giving himself to chess; and there the room where, poring over the chequered field, he trained his mind for future immortal conquests. There few, if any, could gain admittance to him." The *profanum vulgus* still remember him only as a pale young man, lost in abstractions; wandering, at times, from his house to say a few words to the manager of his tobacco business, then silently gliding away. Mr. Paulsen was right in leaving Dubuque: they didn't appreciate his great worth and powers, and could not understand the soaring flights of his wonderful genius.'

Tournament and match record

All in all, Paulsen took part in 19 tournaments of significance. Of these he won five and finished second in four. The highlights of his career were in the early years, between 1857 and 1864, and from 1877 till 1880,

when some considered him the best in the world again. His lesser results were often explained by Paulsen's difficulty handling the time-limit of 20 (or even 15) moves per hour that became usual after 1862. He was an extremely slow player, and many excellently set up games were marred by mistakes in his time-trouble.

Paulsen has always been held in higher esteem as a match player. He played seven matches against strong masters like Anderssen, Kolisch and Neumann, of which he won five and drew two. Against Anderssen, he drew one match and won two. As late as 1886, a possible match for the World Championship between Steinitz and Paulsen was in the offing. Although Steinitz lauded Paulsen, he cannot but have thought that such a match would render him relatively easy money, given the fact that Paulsen had lost all his tournament games against him, with the exception of the first one they played.

In his early career, Paulsen was best known as a blindfold expert. He began experimenting on a modest scale in Dubuque against two weak opponents. During the American Chess Congress, he gradually set himself bigger challenges, with exhibitions against two, three, four and then five opponents. With the latter exhibition he improved on the previous record held by Kieseritzky. In 1858, Paulsen took on seven, eight and ultimately 10 opponents. He even began an exhibition on 15 boards, but this attempt had to be aborted due to the lack of interest of his opponents.

Paulsen was known for his exaggerated modesty, but he was always calmly confident about his abilities in this form of chess. It seemed to cost him hardly any extra effort, and he played more than one model game without seeing the board. After having suffered from a severe illness in 1865-1866, his performances gradually became rarer, but the reputation he had earned never went away.

Severe wake-up call

After his loss to Morphy in New York in 1857, Paulsen developed from a theoretical ignoramus to one of the great theoretical innovators of our game. Paulsen's influence on opening theory has been immense and must not be underestimated. With both black and white, he came up with novelties in topical lines, coherently developed totally new systems and also refuted various romantic openings.

His loss to Morphy had been a severe wake-up call. For many people, the first impression was that he was simply outclassed by the American phenomenon (as all of his contemporaries were), but he must have realized that while his opponent was bookwise, he possessed no theoretical knowledge worth mentioning and had to work everything out by himself at the board.

'Morphy had grown weary of chess and was also reluctant to deal with the excruciating slowness that Paulsen had demonstrated in the New York tournament.'

In his Morphy biography, *The Pride and Sorrow of Chess*, David Lawson writes unconvincingly that 'Paulsen had certainly been more active than Morphy prior to the Congress. While Morphy was yet a college student, playing but a few games of chess here and there, Paulsen had been active in the western United States for some time, playing numerous blindfold and casual games with many strong players.' In actual fact, Paulsen played only little in Dubuque and against very weak opposition.

More correct appears Steinitz's estimate that 'Morphy found his principal adversaries unprepared and rusty, and in consequence his victories were more decisive than they probably would have been otherwise.

'It may be fairly doubted whether more than the name of Paulsen was so easily defeated by the youthful hero in the New York tournament, for the play of the former only developed subsequently, and his whole career would well indicate that he might have made a better score when he was at his real best, though no doubt (..), Morphy would have been his superior anyhow.'

Paulsen understood that his lack of theoretical knowledge was problematic, and once he began to cherish hopes of a match with Morphy, he purchased Staunton's *Handbook* and had the most recent edition of Bilguer's *Handbuch*, edited by von der Lasa, sent to him. Just like all his other books, these copies, filled with observations in his handwriting, are still in the possession of the Paulsen family.

Sadly, his hope for a match with Morphy came to naught. Morphy had grown weary of chess and was also reluctant to deal with the excruciating slowness that Paulsen had demonstrated in the New York tournament. He only offered a few offhand games in which he would give Paulsen the odds of pawn and move – while Paulsen clearly had something more honourable in mind. Some of his contemporaries had their doubts about Morphy's unwilling attitude:

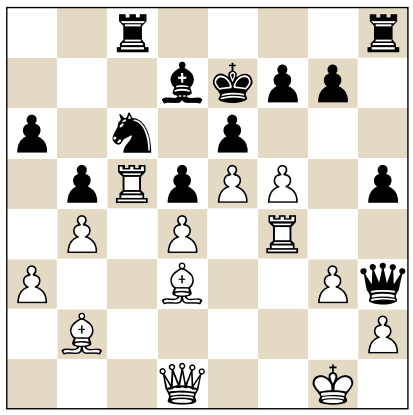
'(I)t strikes us (...) that a graceful acceptance of Mr. Paulsen's challenge would have been more consonant with that character for knightly courtesy and liberal feeling, which Mr. Morphy has previously so admirably earned.' [*Morning Courier and New York Inquirer*, 20 October 1860]

Opening innovator

The new ideas he had started to work on, Paulsen unleashed in Europe, after his return from the New World. Soon he gained a reputation as a theoretician. With white, Paulsen showed himself to be a loyal 1.e4 player. In his match against Kolisch, he quickly built up a 6-1 lead, mainly relying on his opening novelties. One of Paulsen's principal contributions was in the Advance Variation of the French, which he resurrected for nearly a decade, until Tarrasch brought it down again (temporarily).

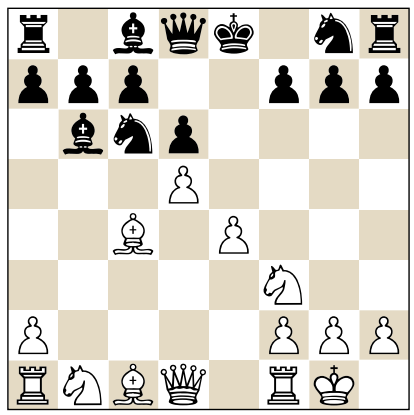
Paulsen designed a scheme that intended to dominate the entire board. Against weaker opposition he often reached this dream scenario, as in the following game.

Louis Paulsen
Adolf Stern
Frankfurt 1878
French Defence, Advance Variation
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♕b6 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.♗e2 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♗b4+ 8.♘c3 ♘ge7 9.0-0 ♘f5 10.♘a4 ♕d8 11.a3 ♗e7 12.b4 a6 13.♗b2 ♗d7 14.♖c1 b5 15.♘c5 h5 16.♗d3 ♗xc5 17.♖xc5 ♘h4 18.♘xh4 ♕xh4 19.f4 ♔e7 20.f5 ♖ac8 21.g3 ♕h3 22.♖f4



And Black resigned.

However, Paulsen's most numerous and important contributions to chess theory were designed for Black. Working on his own as well as with Wilfried, he put several romantic lines out of business. Revolutionary was his set-up against the Evans Gambit, which he first played in the decisive game in the first round of the Bristol tournament against Kolisch. After **1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.b4 ♗xb4 5.c3 ♗a5 6.d4 exd4 7.0-0 d6 8.cxd4 ♗b6 9.d5**



he came up with **9...♘a5** 9...♘ce7 was common. **10.♗b2 ♘e7** – where in earlier games the knight used to land on f6.

Of course, he is chiefly known to modern players for the Paulsen Variation of the Sicilian. At the first American Congress, he had met Morphy's **1.e4** uniquely with **1...c5**, trying to avoid openings that were more popular in those days and with which the book-wise Morphy would have been much more familiar. His early use of the Sicilian could hardly be called a success, and apart from a game against Steinitz in London 1862 (that was equally dramatic), Paulsen banned the Sicilian from his tournament practice for 20 years.

It was only in the beginning of the 1880s that Paulsen began to experiment with several Sicilian set-ups. It has often been said that Louis stood at the cradle of the Dragon Variation. Indeed, he tried fianchettoing his bishop for the first time against Steinitz in the above-mentioned game in London 1862, but this was no success at all.

Its reintroduction into master practice occurred at Wiesbaden in 1880, where Wilfried Paulsen played it first on July 5. The next day Louis also played it – one of the few times in

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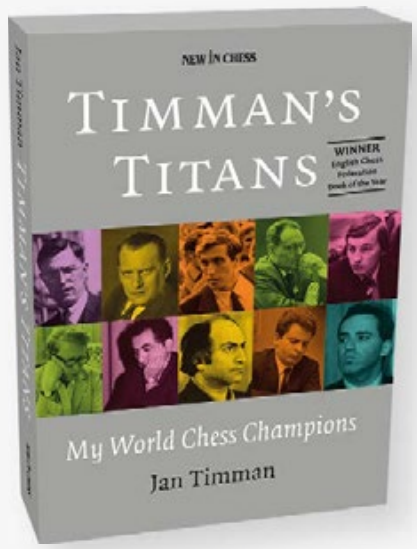

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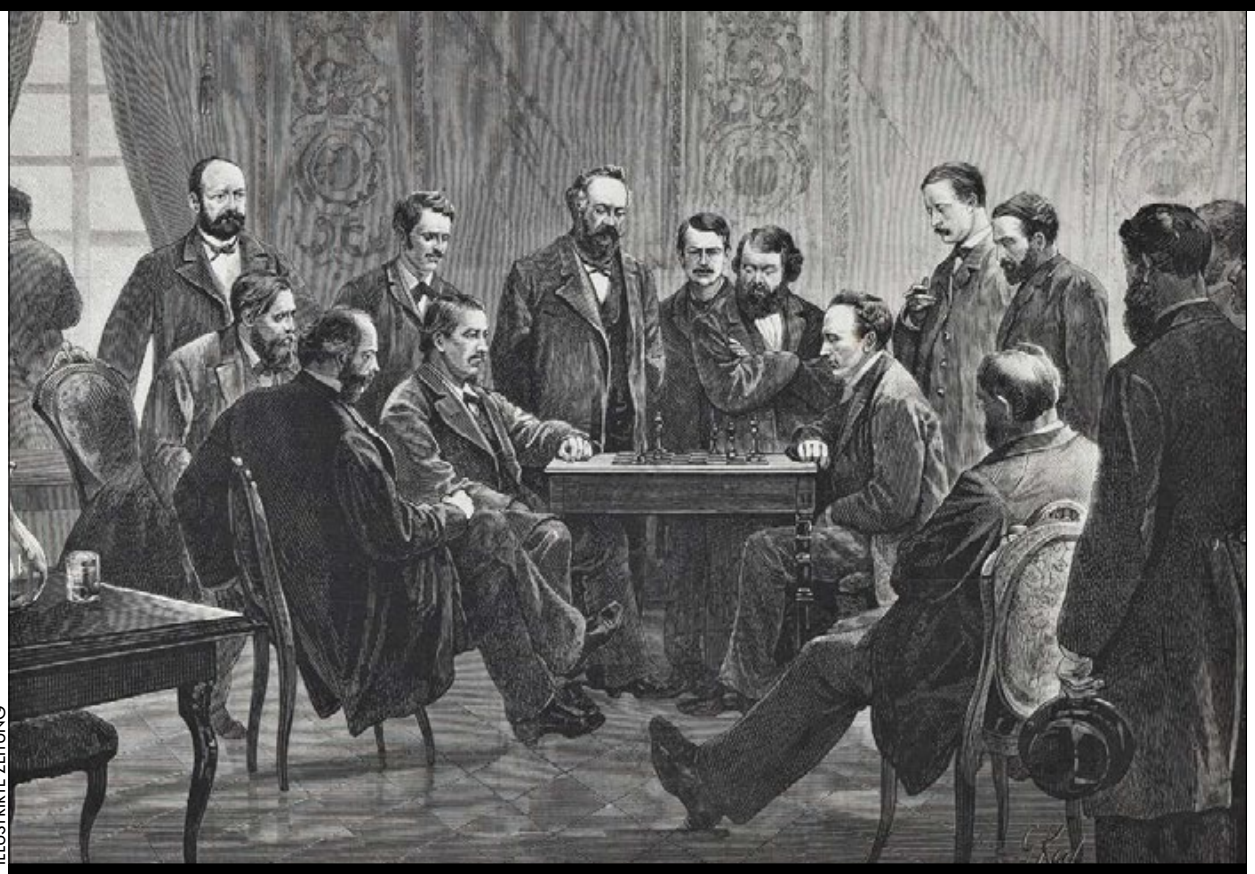


ILLUSTRIRTE ZEITUNG

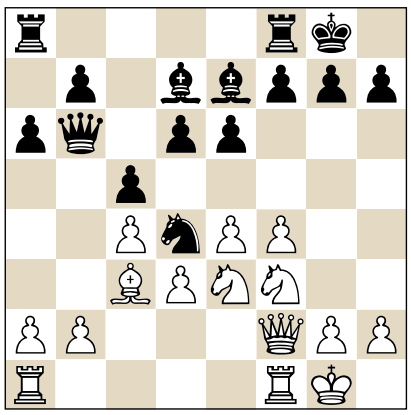
**The international tournament in Wiesbaden in 1880.
Sitting at the table are Joseph Henry Blackburne and Louis Paulsen.
In the middle (arms crossed) Wilhelm Steinitz is one of the onlookers.**

his life – and two days later Winawer followed into Louis' footsteps against the same opponent, Alexander Fritz. Soon it became the trademark opening of Henry Bird, who had also played in Wiesbaden, and became the first master to employ it regularly.

The next year, in Berlin, Paulsen played the variation that would carry his name, but is also known as the Kan Variation (named after the Russian master Ilya Kan, 1909-1978). At least as much credit, however, must go to his brother Wilfried, who had already played it in 1879 and 1880, and continued playing this opening much more intensively than his brother.

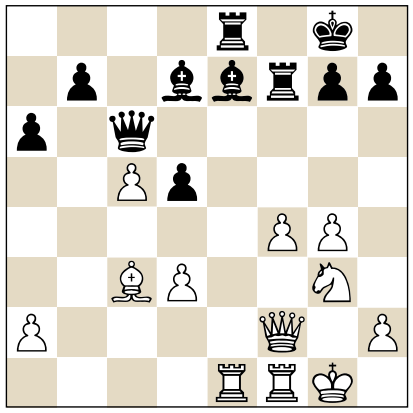
In Vienna 1882, Paulsen tried to exploit the then usual practice of waiting with the push d4, when, after **1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3**, he played **3...♕b6**, with the idea of turning the game into a Closed Sicilian. This early queen sortie met with general disbelief. Minckwitz wrote: 'We don't know what to say of this move', and Zukertort commented: 'A very inferior continuation.' Paulsen's score with it was pretty depressing, yet he usually got good positions, as in the following game, after White's 17th move, against Mackenzie.

George Henry Mackenzie
Louis Paulsen
Vienna 1882



position after 17.♕f2

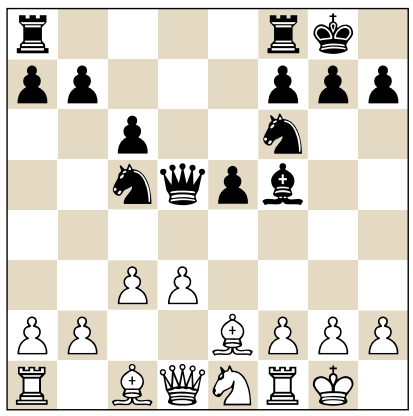
Paulsen's position is solid, and he now rightly expands.
17...f5! 18.exf5 ♘xf5 19.♖ae1 ♖ae8 20.♘xf5 ♖xf5 21.♘d2 ♗f8 22.g4 ♖f7 23.♘e4 ♗e7 24.b4 ♕c6 25.bxc5 d5! 26.cxd5? White should play for a draw with 26.♘d6 ♗xd6 27.cxd6 dxc4 28.♕d4 ♖c8 29.dxc4 ♕xc4 30.♕xc4 ♖xc4. **26...exd5 27.♘g3**



27...♗xc5? Here Paulsen errs. Instead, 27...♗xg4! ruins White's position. Black threatens 28...♕xc5 as well as 28...♗h3. The game continued with **28.♖xe8+ ♗xe8 29.♗d4 ♗f8 30.f5 ♕a4 31.♘h5 ♖c7?!** An utterly careless move. **32.f6!** and Black was hooked.

Purposefulness and planning

Paulsen's opening innovations were well thought out and often led to a small (or large) middlegame advantage, which Paulsen extended with precise positional play. His games are characterized by a purposefulness and planning, both of which were virtually non-existent at that time.
An impressive example is the game Paulsen-Von Bardeleben, Breslau 1889. Paulsen began with **1.e4 e5 2.♘c3 ♗c5 3.♘f3 d6 4.♘a4** A typical Paulsen sortie – always ready to guarantee himself the bishop pair. **4...♘d7 5.d3 ♘gf6 6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0 c6 8.♘xc5 ♘xc5** Paulsen's set-up has been very modest – see also his ninth and 11th move. **9.♘e1 d5 10.exd5 ♕xd5 11.c3 ♗f5**



At first sight Black stands very well, but now Paulsen demonstrates his plan. **12.f4 e4 13.d4 ♘a6 14.♘c2** The centre is blocked, White's knight is on its way to juicy squares and he has a free hand on the kingside. **14...♕a5 15.♘e3 ♗d7 16.♘c4 ♕d8 17.f5** etc. (1-0, 58).

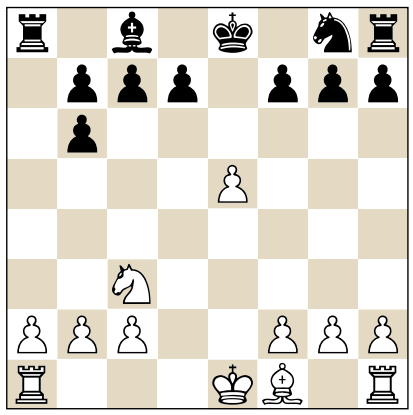
Another such game that continues to impress and which we count among his best, was the following one against Neumann.

Louis Paulsen
Gustav Neumann
Berlin 1864 (3rd match game)
Scotch Game

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♘xd4 ♗c5 5.♗e3 ♘xd4 Not the most challenging plan. **6.♗xd4 ♗xd4 7.♕xd4 ♕f6 8.e5 ♕b6 9.♕xb6 axb6**

Neumann has fulfilled his aim for simplification, but as Paulsen will demonstrate with iron logic, his problems are far from over yet.

10.♘c3



10...♖a5? The decisive mistake already. The immediate 10...f6 would have corroded White's stronghold – the e5-pawn, while after 11.♘d5 ♔d8 12.exf6 ♘xf6 White's strongest piece would be swapped off as well. What follows is vintage Paulsen. **11.f4 f6 12.0-0-0 fxe5 13.b4! ♖a8 14.fxe5 ♘h6 15.♗c4 ♘f5 16.♘d5! ♔d8 17.♖hf1 g6 18.g4 ♘e7 19.♘xe7 ♔xe7 20.♖f7+ ♔e8 21.e6 dxe6 22.♖xc7** Black resigned.

The antithesis of genius

In an article on Paulsen, Imre König notices that his subject was only little appreciated in his time. Differing notably from the romantics, Paulsen was categorized by his contemporaries as a boring player. König writes: 'And how is it that Louis Paulsen's name remained so long in obscurity? It is because we still labour under preconceived ideas, and in the beginning of his chess career – when the "Romantic School" flourished – he stood apart, preferring defence to attack. He did this when Morphy and Anderssen lived, when brilliant combinations and fierce attack characterized the mode of play. The principles of modern chess had not yet been laid down, and to be on the defensive meant to wait for the unexpected onslaught. In Paulsen's time, a player who worked hard over the board to cope with the problems of the position in a game was considered the antithesis of a genius. Paulsen therefore never recovered from the prejudice of his contemporaries, even after he became successful against Anderssen, with whom he drew one match and from whom he later won two short ones.' (*Louis Paulsen: Father of Hypermodern chess?*)

That Paulsen fell into oblivion can be partly explained by the obscurity of the publications in which he wrote on the game and the fact that influential authors like Richard Réti and Max Euwe neglected him. A look at the sources nevertheless shows that some of Paulsen's contemporaries were conscious of what he was trying to do and showed their appreciation for his efforts and talent.

Steinitz's appreciation of Paulsen becomes clear in his obituary. Though Steinitz had claimed to be the inventor of the modern school and its principles, he always granted that others had inspired him. Besides Carl Hamppe, whom he became well acquainted to while still in Vienna, Paulsen was the second player to exert his influence upon him – and probably none other equalled him in this:

'He was one of the chief pioneers of the modern school which has been so much decried during its advance, but has established itself victoriously after a hard struggle against a sort of sentimental opposition. So far from my wishing to be intolerant against the adverse critics of the modern principles. I freely beg to state that in

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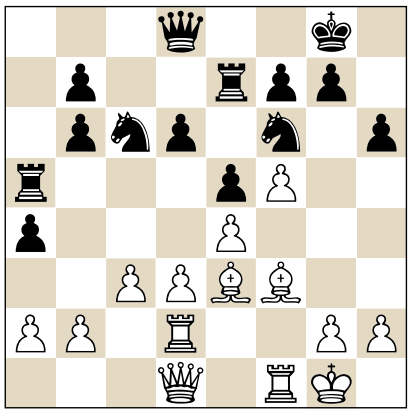
the early part of my career I myself was an absolute believer in the old system, and I well recollect that when I first met Kolisch and Anderssen, I expressed myself in very derogatory terms about Paulsen's style of play. But both those masters warmly defended Paulsen against my general criticism and this set me thinking. Some of the games which I saw Paulsen play during the London congress of 1862 gave a still stronger start to the modification of my own opinions, which has since developed, and I began to recognize that chess genius is not confined to the more or less deep and brilliant finishing strokes after the original balance of power and position has been overthrown, but that it also requires the exercise of still more extraordinary powers, though perhaps of a different kind, to maintain that balance or respectively to disturb it at the proper time in one's own favour.' [*New York Daily Tribune*, 23 August 1891]

A look at Paulsen's London games yields several great positional displays. Take, for example, the following position from his game against MacDonnell, in which Paulsen launches a, now classic, type of attack, but also makes sure that Black's queenside pieces stay out of the game.

Louis Paulsen
George MacDonnell
London 1862



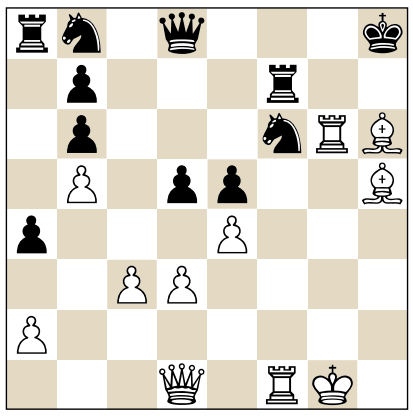
position after 18...♖e7

Paulsen here continued craftily with **19.g4 ♘h7 20.♖g2 f6 21.b4 ♖a8**

NIGEL WEBB

Louis Paulsen was often described as tall with a remarkably big head. The other gentleman in this photo from around 1861 is George Webb Medley.

22.b5 ♘b8 23.h4 ♖f7 24.g5 fxg5 25.♗h5 ♖d7 26.hxg5 d5 27.f6 gxf6 28.gxf6+ ♔h8 29.♗xh6 ♘xf6 30.♖g6 ♖f7



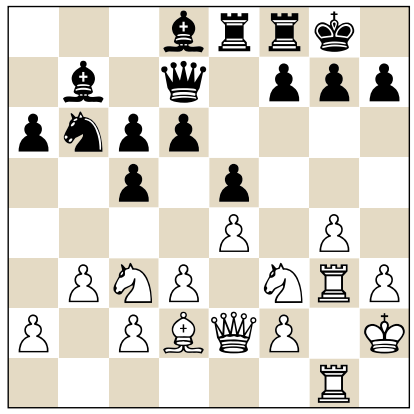
31.♖fxf6 ♕xf6 32.♖xf6 ♖xf6 33.♕g4 ♖xh6 34.♕c8+ ♔g7 35.♕xb7+ ♘d7 36.♕xa8 ♖xh5 37.♕b7 dxe4 38.♕xd7+ ♔g6 39.♕e6+ And Black resigned.

Great defensive players

In the chapter 'Heroic defence', in his book *Chess Praxis*, Nimzowitsch praises a few chosen ones: 'The number of *great defensive* players is quite small. The author knows only of the following: Steinitz, Dr. Emanuel Lasker, Amos Burn, Dr. Osip Bernstein, Oldrich Duras and last, but not least, Louis Paulsen.' That 'last, but not least' can easily be replaced by 'in the first place' – at least chronologically – because before Paulsen, defence in chess was an utterly neglected territory.

Paulsen's most impressive work of art, in which he perfectly combined defence with counter-attack, occurred against Adolf Anderssen in the Hamburg 1869 tournament. After 17 moves, with Black (Paulsen) to move, the following position had been reached.

Adolf Anderssen
Louis Paulsen
Hamburg 1869



position after 17.♖ag1

Clearly Anderssen has grim plans on the kingside against Paulsen's king and the doubling of his rooks, albeit on an as yet closed file, looks impressive already. Yet there are no direct problems looming for Paulsen: he has strong influence in the centre and can rely on his beloved bishop pair. Here he came up with a brilliant move – also the top choice of modern engines: **17...♘a8!!** Clearly showing that he has detected his worst piece and designed a plan to improve its prospects. Anderssen succeeded in creating a dangerous attack – but Paulsen's defence was first class all over and he prevailed in 43 moves. ■

Hans Renette is the author of Louis Paulsen: A Chess Biography, which will be published by McFarland later this year.

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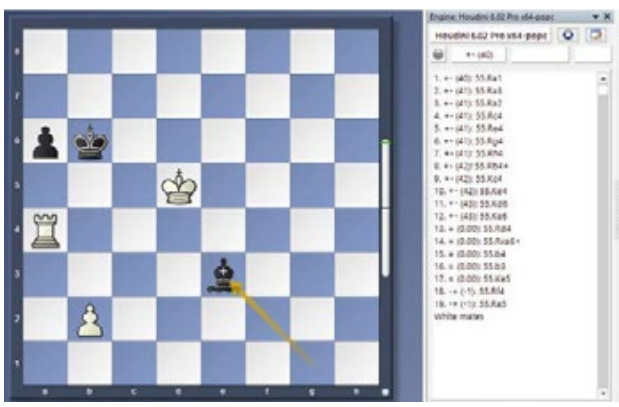

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The Blitz Whisperer

Maxim Dlugy

An opening perfectly suited for blitz

In our time, blitz encompasses the vast majority of all chess games being played on this planet, thanks to the numerous platforms that have created a wonderful way for chess players to interact across continents and generations. Starting with this issue, our new columnist **MAXIM DLUGY** will guide you through the fascinating world of blitz, giving expert tips and showing great games.

I love blitz. Ever since my father's friend brought a chess clock to one of our regular games and explained the rules, I became fascinated with the additional dimension that time provided. It's only thanks to blitz that I am writing this column, as it enabled me to continue playing chess in the years when I had limited time for it due to my other profession.

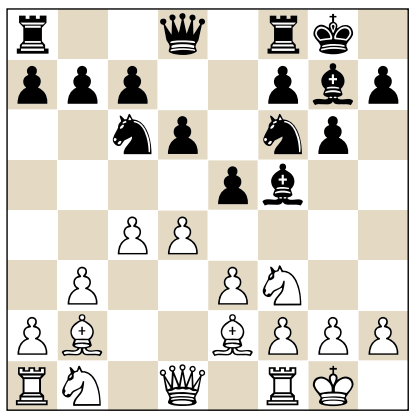
In this inaugural article, I will focus on specialization in blitz. When choosing an opening for blitz, it's important that you know the basic development patterns that you will choose, depending on your opponent's replies, and that your opening will create certain positional or tactical problems that your opponents will have to spend time solving. Don't forget that in blitz a minute is worth much more than in a tournament game, so even if your opening simply forces your opponent to think, without getting you an objective advantage – it's worth playing!

When analysing the results of the Tal Memorial Blitz tournament in Moscow, I noted that the outright winner, Sergey Karjakin, who scored an amazing 10/13 points, and the runner-up, Hikaru Nakamura, with 8½/13, both did an outstanding job with the white pieces. Sergey scored 6/7 points, allowing two draws, while Hikaru scored 5/6, also allowing only two draws. While both of them tried different openings with White, they scored 6/6 playing the Larsen (1.b3) Opening! (in one game, Hikaru actually played b3 on move 2, after starting with 1.♘f3). Hikaru won all four games with the Larsen Opening, while Sergey won both games that he played. I decided to analyse what makes this opening so good for blitz and wondered why these players don't play it more often in tournaments?

Let's take a look at some of the key ideas. In the following game against Boris Gelfand, you can see Sergey gradually improving his position, taking more and more space until Boris simply loses his knight. Black's mistake was that he did not change the nature of the position when it was necessary. Most likely reason: lack of time to figure it out.

Sergey Karjakin
Boris Gelfand
Moscow Tal Memorial 2018 (12)
Larsen Opening

1.b3 e5 2.♗b2 ♘c6 3.e3 d6 4.c4 g6 5.♘f3 ♗g7 6.♗e2 ♘f6 7.d4 0-0 8.0-0 ♗f5

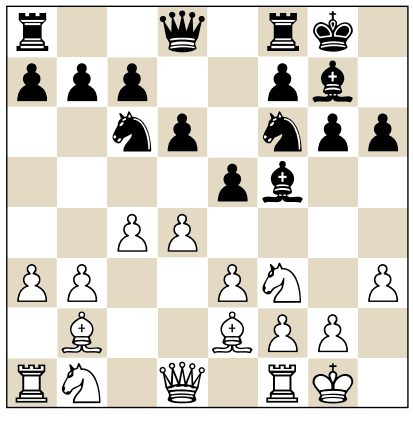


The trick Black is relying on is that if White ever captures on e5, Black will play ...♘g4, pinning the pawn along the long diagonal. The position

is equal, but let's see how it goes all wrong for Black.

9.h3 h6 Black has developed his pieces, and it was time to start fighting for central squares with 9...exd4 10.♘xd4 ♘e4. In this case Black would be absolutely fine after 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 13.♕d4+ ♕f6 14.♗f3 ♕xd4 15.exd4 ♖fe8, although the endgame would remain complicated, with chances for both sides.

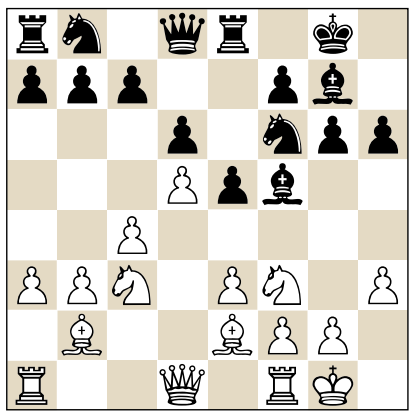
10.a3



10...♖e8

Gelfand wouldn't mind a typical King's Indian structure after d5, but will need to come up with tactical antidotes to White's space advantage, which takes time in lesser-known positions than his well-researched King's Indian main lines. A simpler way to play was 10...exd4 11.♘xd4 ♘xd4 12.♗xd4 ♘e4 13.♗f3 ♗xd4 14.♕xd4 ♖e8. These massive exchanges would save time for later and allow Black to expect a peaceful outcome.

11.d5 ♘b8 12.♘c3



Now, unless Black starts something fast, White will be significantly better.

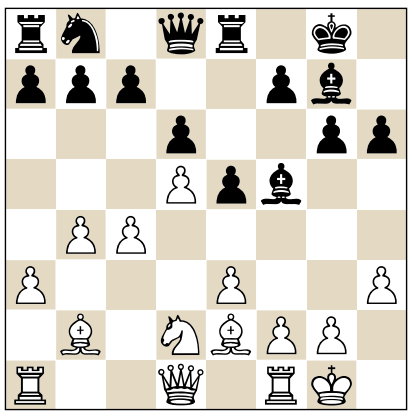
MARIA EMELIANOVA

This year's Tal Memorial was a Rapid & Blitz event. In the Blitz, Sergey Karjakin won, scoring an amazing 10/13 points. With the Larsen Opening the Russian scored a perfect 2/2.

12...♘e4

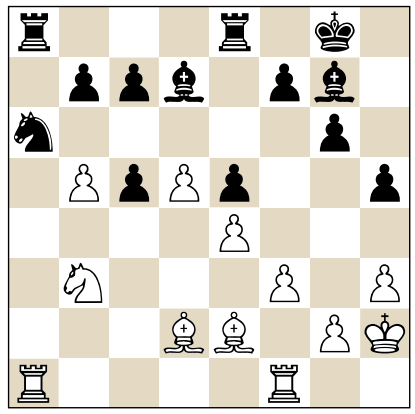
This exchange simply helps White clarify his advantage. It was crucial to start counterplay immediately with 12...g5! 13.♘d2 e4, taking much needed space, when the position would be roughly balanced.

13.♘xe4 ♗xe4 14.♘d2 ♗f5 15.b4



Now, with simple moves, White creates a huge advantage. Watch Sergey's baby steps!

15...a5 16.♗c3 One. **16...♘a6 17.♘b3** Two. **17...axb4 18.axb4** Three. **18...♕g5 19.♔h2** Four. **19...h5 20.♕d2** Five. **20...♗e4 21.f3** Six. **21...♗f5 22.e4** Seven. **22...♕xd2 23.♗xd2** Eight. **23...♗d7 24.c5** Nine. **24...dxc5 25.b5**



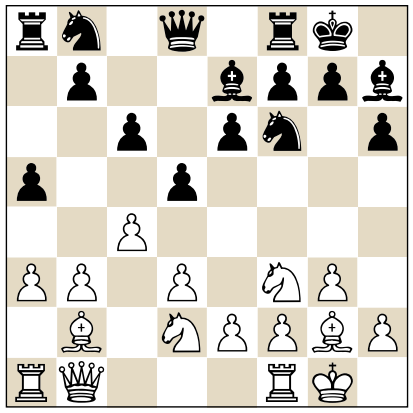
And ten – Game over. Black loses a piece and resigned. Amazing how the position simply played itself! Now imagine you are playing a blitz game and the position plays itself – wouldn't that just be a great thing to happen? The Larsen Opening

allows you to develop both bishops and knights quickly, saving you time on thinking in the opening. Your opponent, on the other hand, may start thinking about finding the best moves to try and punish you for not playing the conventional 1.d4 or 1.e4.

In the next game, Alexander Grischuk, as Black, chose the Classical London System Defence to Sergey's Réti set-up (b3 combined with g3), but faltered in the middlegame when he started getting low on time. This allowed Sergey to keep up the pressure well into the endgame, which eventually earned him a win.

Sergey Karjakin
Alexander Grischuk
Moscow Tal Memorial 2018 (1)
Larsen Opening

1.b3 d5 2.♗b2 ♗f5 3.♘f3 e6 4.g3 h6 5.♗g2 ♘f6 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.c4 0-0 8.d3 ♗h7 9.♘bd2 a5 10.a3 c6 11.♕b1



This move was new to Grischuk, who had already won twice against ♕c2 in this position versus Caruana and Rapport by playing ...♘a6 in response. The slightly different queen placement got Grischuk thinking for 39 seconds to decide on the best square for his knight. The classic counterplay with ...♘bd7, ...♗d6, ...♖e8 and ...e5-e4 seems fine here, but Alexander chose another set-up.

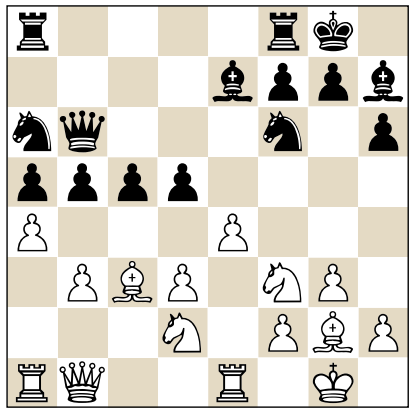
11...♘a6 12.♗c3 c5

A smart idea, but 48 seconds? A bit too much for a blitz game. This will become costly later.

13.cxd5 exd5 14.e4 b5

Grischuk has decided to play aggressively to compensate for his time lag. It's generally a good idea to steer the game towards forcing play when you are short of time, as it will enable you to make decisions quickly and lead to positions that are generally easier to play.

15.♖e1 ♕b6 16.a4



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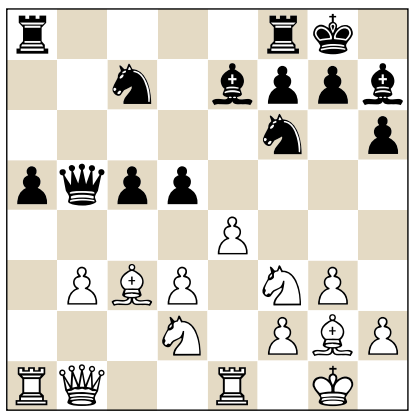
Sergey invested 55 seconds in this move, which fights for the c4-square, as otherwise Black's space advantage could become significant.

16...♘c7? A strange decision that took Black over 30 seconds. It would have been much faster and stronger to simply play the intuitive 16...♘b4, filling the gap provided by White's previous move. Black's retreat gives White a significant advantage.

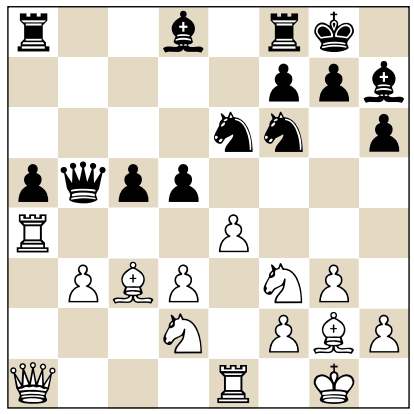
17.axb5 ♕xb5



Grischuk thought for a further 18 seconds and decided that after ...♘xb5, which was the point of his previous move, White simply moves the bishop to b2, and the weaknesses on b3 and d3 will no longer be pressured. So he takes with the queen.

18.♖a4 Sergey immediately picks up on the weak a5-pawn and prepares to pile up on it, while also controlling action on the 4th rank. An excellent multi-purpose move, leaving him in control.

18...♘e6 19.♕a1 ♗d8

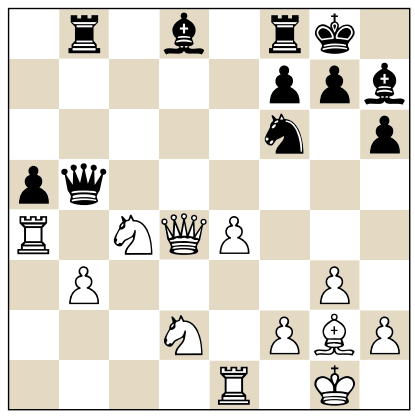


This move took a record 58 seconds and put Black in a very bad time situation. It's interesting that for his reply Sergey, who was ahead by almost two minutes, took 57 seconds, to make sure that he would remain in a dominant position. The key in blitz is to have more time than your opponent, so you can choose when to take time to create a significant advantage.

20.♘e5 dxe4 21.dxe4 ♘d4

Black has to try to at least get the bishop for the knight, as he is about to lose the a-pawn anyway.

22.♗xd4 cxd4 23.♘ec4 ♖b8 24.♕xd4



White has a clear advantage, with an extra pawn and a time advantage on the clock. Against most players this would be enough for Karjakin to win easily, but Grischuk fought like a tiger before finally succumbing to Sergey's speed and accuracy (1-0, 67).

The moral: Play plans with a slight twist and you are sure to get your opponent thinking. 11.♕b1 was in essence the nuance that got Black off balance.

Nakamura's blitz philosophy

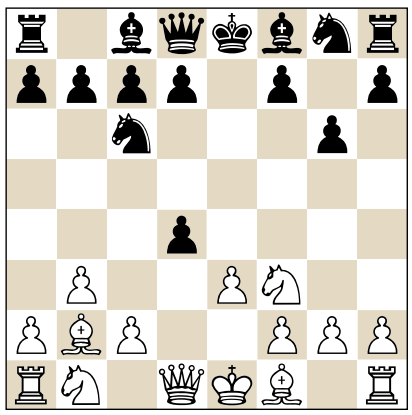
When Hikaru Nakamura plays blitz, it's almost always mostly about speed. His blitz philosophy is quite simple and very practical: Play ultra-fast at the start of the game to put your opponent in an inferior time situation. Continue the game at a rhythm that will not allow him to catch up on time. Create tactical and positional threats that force him to think, and when he is very short on time, hit

'The key in blitz is to have more time than your opponent, so you can choose when to take time to create a significant advantage.'

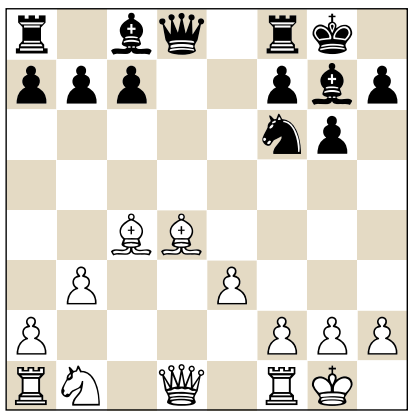
him with a difficult tactical problem to solve. Most of the time, this works great and allows him to win seemingly bad or completely bland positions. Let's see how he takes out former World Blitz Champion Dmitry Andreikin.

Hikaru Nakamura
Dmitry Andreikin
Moscow Tal Memorial 2018 (6)
Larsen Opening

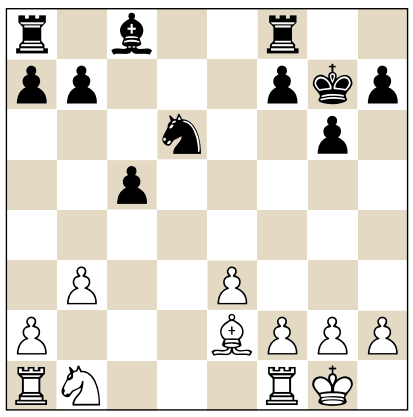
1.b3 e5 2.♗b2 ♘c6 3.e3 g6 4.d4 exd4 5.♘f3



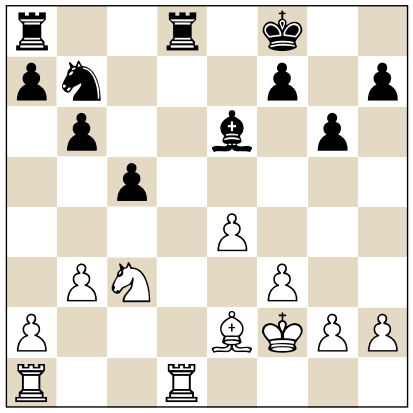
5...♗g7 It's interesting that not a single brave person has tried to hang on to the extra pawn after 5...♗b4+ 6.c3 dxc3 7.♘xc3 ♘f6 8.a3 ♗xc3+ 9.♗xc3 0-0 10.♗b2. It probably has something to do with the long diagonal, although the engine thinks Black is fine.
6.♘xd4 ♘f6 7.♗e2 0-0 8.0-0 ♘xd4 9.♗xd4 d5 10.c4 dxc4 11.♗xc4



Amazingly, this position also occurred in Hikaru's game against Boris Gelfand in this same tournament. I see no reason to avoid this position for Black, and it is testament to Nakamura's blitz abilities and not to the strength of the opening that he managed to outplay both his opponents from here.
11...♕d6 12.♗b2 ♘e4 13.♗xg7 ♔xg7 14.♕xd6 ♘xd6 15.♗e2 c5

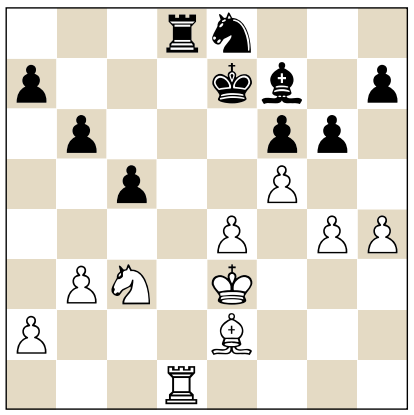


Dmitry spent 41 seconds on this move, deciding to fix White's b3-pawn on a light square. Since there are many reasonable moves, I would suggest that playing any of them faster would have been a better course of action.
16.♖d1 ♖d8 17.♘c3 ♗e6 18.e4 b6 19.f3 ♔f8 20.♔f2 ♘b7

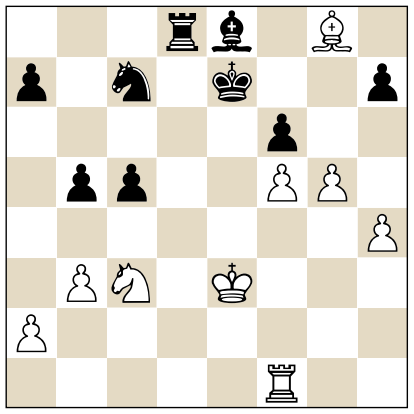


Black has opted for a somewhat passive way of playing this position. Instead of breaking with ...c4 or ...f5 earlier, or gathering his forces on the d-file before fighting for it, he chose to offer trades by retreating. This gives White time to take over the space on the kingside, creating an unpleasant situation for Black.
21.♘b5 ♔e7 22.f4 ♘d6 23.♘c3 ♖ac8 24.g4 f6 25.f5 ♗f7 26.♔e3 ♘e8 Once again a retreat. Black should be aiming for counterplay on the queenside and play ...a5 to prepare ...c4 at the right time. After 26...a5 27.♘b5 ♘xb5 28.♗xb5 h5, Black would still have a reasonable position.

27.h4 ♖xd1 28.♖xd1 ♖d8



29.♖f1
Hikaru is true to himself and maintains the tension. I am pretty sure Magnus Carlsen would have believed in his 'first to get a passed pawn' advantage here and have played 29.♖xd8 ♔xd8 30.g5. As Black cannot create counterplay on the queenside, his position looks pretty sad on the kingside. Passive play in the endgame is going to get you in trouble!
29...gxf5 30.exf5 ♘c7 31.♗c4
Here Black could have taken on c4 and have aimed for that weak pawn with ...♘e8-d6, but he opted for counterplay with ...b5 instead.
31...♗e8 32.g5 b5 33.♗g8

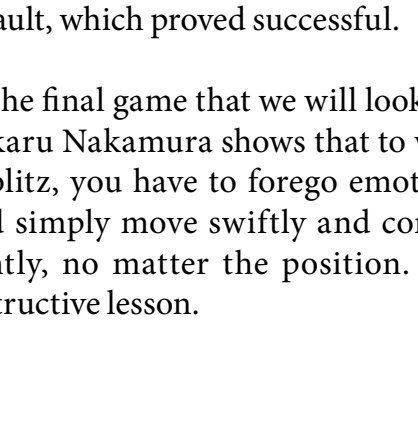


And this is vintage Hikaru! Unexpected moves like ♗g8 create the illusion that Black has blundered, forcing your opponent to lose hope and miss reasonable responses, while also squandering the remains of your time. Dmitry now spent 39 seconds but missed the best reply.
33...♗h5?
Correct was 33...♗c6, stopping ♖h1

'Passive play in the ending is going to get you in trouble!'

from defending the h4-pawn. Now, after 34.♗xh7 ♖d4 35.g6 (35.♖f4 is met by 35...b4, and Black is safe!) 35...♔f8 36.h5 ♔g7, White would need to extricate his bishop with 37.h6+ ♔xh6 38.♗g8 ♔g7 39.♗f7, but after 39...♖h4 Black has enough play to keep things balanced.

34.♗xh7 c4 35.bxc4 bxc4 36.♖c1 ♖d3+ 37.♔f2 ♖d2+ 38.♔g1 ♖d4 39.♖e1+ ♔f8 40.♘e4 ♘d5 41.gxf6 c3 42.♗g6 c2 43.♘g5



Even though Andreikin had defended extremely well, the eight seconds he had left stopped him from finding the draw with ...♖g4+, and he went all out with: **43...♘e3??** Forgetting about the knight on g5. After **44.♘e6+ ♔g8 45.f7+** White can prepare to queen (or rook) the f-pawn, so Black resigned.

As you can see from this game, Hikaru's unassuming opening was designed to lull his opponent into a false sense of security, while in fact he has played these positions hundreds of times and knows the pitfalls associated with the various set-ups. In this case, Andreikin's passive play led him to a difficult endgame, which took him to under 10 seconds. This was when Hikaru, who still had more than 30 seconds left, prepared his final assault, which proved successful.

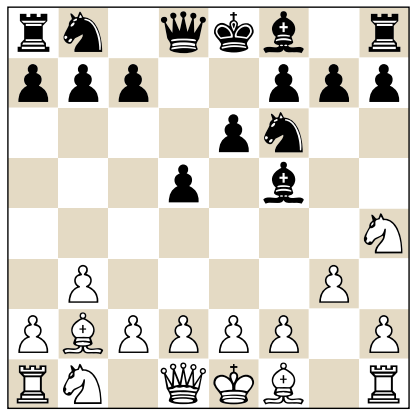
In the final game that we will look at, Hikaru Nakamura shows that to win at blitz, you have to forego emotion and simply move swiftly and confidently, no matter the position. An instructive lesson.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Blitz ace Hikaru Namakura finished second in Moscow. The American's blitz philosophy is 'quite simple and practical' as Maxim Dlugy puts it. Fortunately he also explains what he means by that!

Hikaru Nakamura
Alexander Grischuk
Moscow Tal Memorial 2018 (8)
Réti Opening

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.b3 d5 3.♗b2 ♗f5 4.g3 e6 5.♘h4

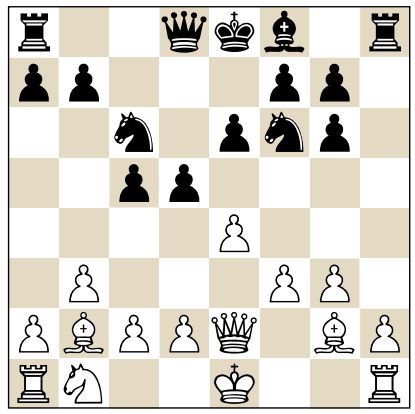


Here Nakamura demonstrates another one of his typical plans. He forces a trade of his knight for the opponent's bishop, even at the cost of compromising his pawn structure. He plans to prove that in a blitz game, these little blemishes will go unnoticed, while he will eventually trade into a superior endgame with a bishop for the knight.

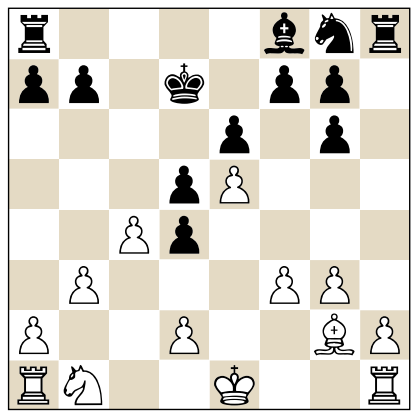
5...♗e4 6.f3 ♗g6 7.♗g2 c5

Interesting, but it was quite possible to simply play 7...♗h5, forcing Hikaru to look for a different plan.

8.♘xg6 hxg6 9.e4 ♘c6 10.♕e2?!



It would have been more sensible to take on d5 instead, but Hikaru has an interesting idea. **10...♘d4 11.♗xd4 cxd4 12.♕b5+ ♕d7 13.♕xd7+ ♔xd7 14.e5 ♘g8 15.c4**



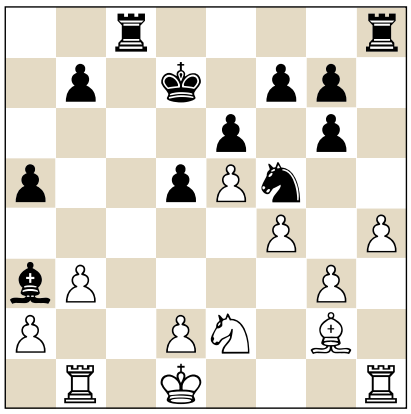
‘Being familiar with positions in blitz is more important that the objective evaluation of the positions you get.’

This seems to have been White’s idea. Even though this looks really unpleasant for White, Hikaru doesn’t mind. He forges ahead.

15...dxc3 Here, 15...♖c8 was also possible, eyeing the h2-pawn in case of cxd5. For example: 15...♖c8 16.cxd5 (after 16.d3 ♗b4+ 17.♔f2 g5 18.a3 ♗c3 19.♖a2 ♘e7 Black is also much better) 16...♖c1+ 17.♔f2 ♖xh1 18.dxe6+ ♔xe6 19.♗xh1 ♖xh2+ 20.♗g2 ♔xe5, and Black is a healthy pawn up.

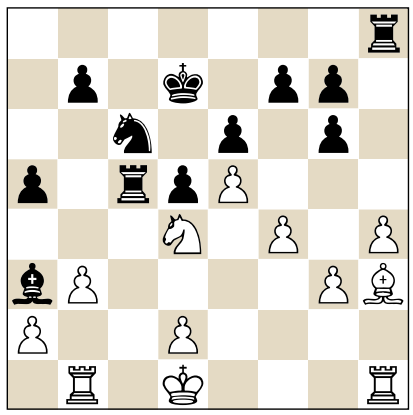
16.♘xc3 ♘e7 Taking some more space with 16...g5! would have given Black a nice positional advantage.

17.f4 ♘f5 18.♘e2 ♖c8 19.♔d1 ♗a3 20.♖b1 a5 21.h4



Of course, Black is still better here, but a clear plan of action is not visible. This is what forces good blitz players, when exasperated, to keep looking for chances instead of playing fast and practical moves. Grischuk took a minute and three seconds for his next move, but it failed to improve his position. Solution: simply play something fast instead, e.g. ...f6, ...♔e7, ...♗c5, ...♔c6, or whatever...

21...♖c5 22.♗h3 ♘e7 23.♘d4 ♘c6



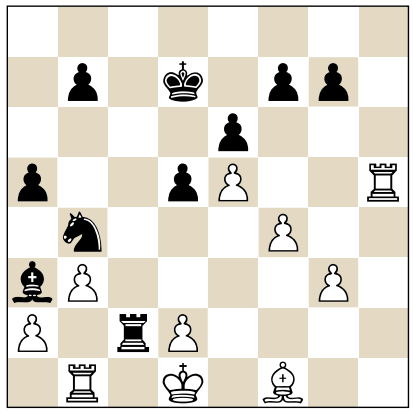
And now Black forgets about his bishop on a3, which thanks to the rook on c5 is now trapped.

24.♘c2 ♖xc2

And this is a bit impractical. Why not force White to play a3 first, before sacrificing on c2? After 24...♗b4 25.a3 ♖xc2 26.♔xc2 ♗xa3, Black should keep the balance.

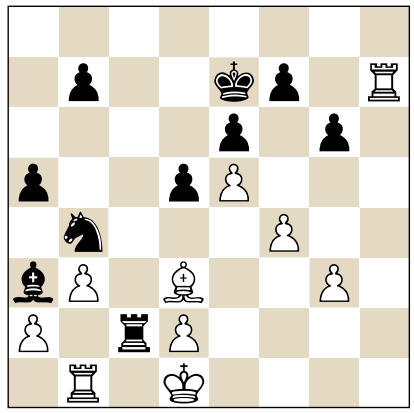
25.♔xc2 ♘b4+ 26.♔d1 ♖c8 27.♗f1 ♖c2 28.h5 Of course, Hikaru immediately senses that there’s bigger fish to fry on the kingside and launches his offensive there.

28...gxh5 29.♖xh5



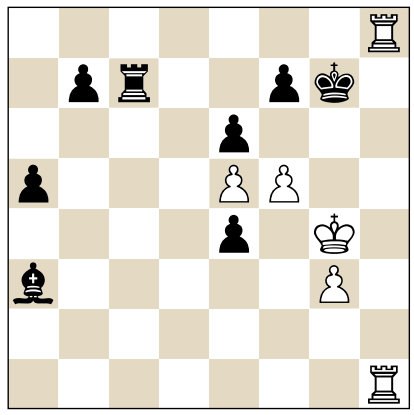
29...g6 The losing move, quite uncharacteristic of Sasha Grischuk. Black should have abandoned the kingside and concentrated on the queenside, where he has real play. After 29...♔c6 30.♖h7 ♖xa2 31.♖xg7 ♘c2 32.♖xf7 ♘d4 33.♖h7 ♘f3 34.♔e2 ♘xd2 35.♖d1 ♘xb3+ 36.♔f3 a4, it would still be anyone’s game, although White’s chances are to be preferred.

30.♖h7 ♔e7 31.♗d3



It’s quite likely that Sasha had simply missed this tactical retort. Now White crashes through on the kingside.

31...♖c7 32.♗xg6 ♔f8 33.♔e2 ♘xa2 34.♖bh1 ♘c1+ 35.♔f3 ♘xb3 36.♖h8+ ♔g7 37.♗d3 ♘xd2+ 38.♔g4 ♘e4 39.♗xe4 dxe4 40.f5



Mate is unavoidable now, so Black resigned.

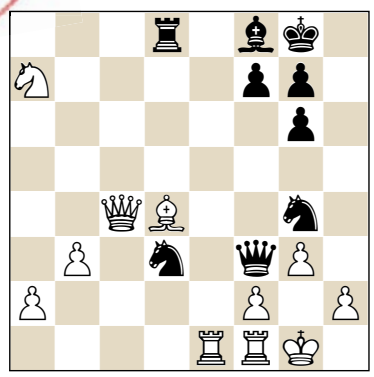
The question begs to be asked: If Hikaru wins so many worse and unpretentious positions in blitz, why does he play an opening that gives him these positions? My answer is that being familiar with positions in blitz is more important than the objective evaluation of the positions you get. So to b3 or not to b3 is up to you, but whatever you do, try to understand the plans connected with your opening!■

Moscow 2018 blitz

				TPR
1	Sergey Karjakin	RUS 2868	10	2973
2	Hikaru Nakamura	USA 2842	8½	2884
3	Ian Nepomniachtchi	RUS 2768	7½	2830
4	Vladislav Artemiev	RUS 2834	7	2795
5	Alexander Grischuk	RUS 2846	7	2795
6	Vladimir Kramnik	RUS 2784	7	2799
7	Daniil Dubov	RUS 2767	6½	2783
8	Dmitry Andreikin	RUS 2828	6½	2778
9	Vishy Anand	IND 2801	6	2762
10	Peter Svidler	RUS 2793	6	2763
11	Alexander Morozevich	RUS 2663	5	2714
12	Vladimir Fedoseev	RUS 2688	5	2712
13	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	AZE 2714	5	2710
14	Boris Gelfand	ISR 2745	4	2646

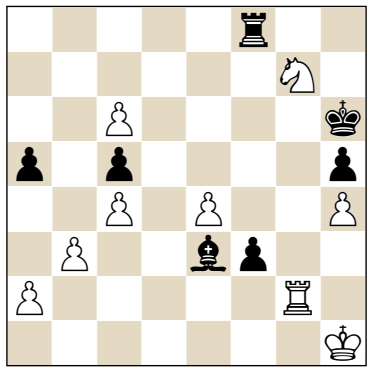
Solutions

from page 53



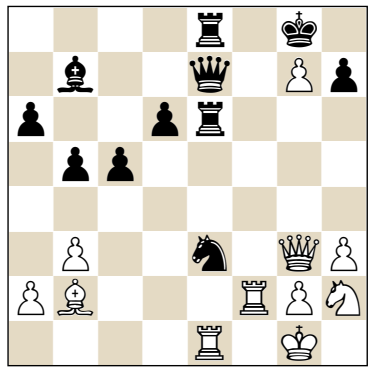
1. Gholami-Alekseenko
Aeroflot Open 2018

28...♘f4! Spurning the rook, threatening either 29...♘h3 or 29...♕g2. **29.gxf4 ♕h3** Followed by 30...♕xh2 mate. White resigned.



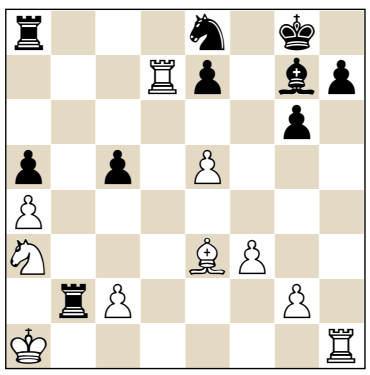
2. Gordievsky-Romanov
Aeroflot Open 2018

43.♘f5+ ♖xf5 43...♔h7 loses to 44.♖g7+ ♔h8 45.♖d7. **44.♖g6+!** The point. After 44...♔xg6 45.exf5+ the c-pawn promotes. Black resigned.



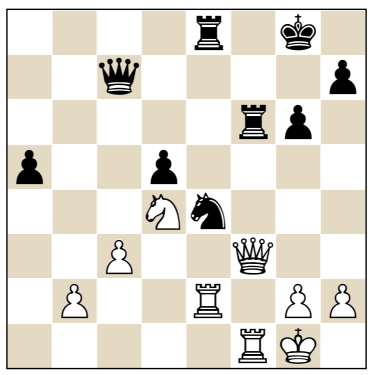
3. Vitiugov-Gledura
Gibraltar 2018

35.♖xe3! ♖xe3 36.♘g4! And Black resigned in view of 36...♖xg3 37.♘h6 mate, 36...♖e6 37.♗f6, or 36...♕g5 37.♕xe3.



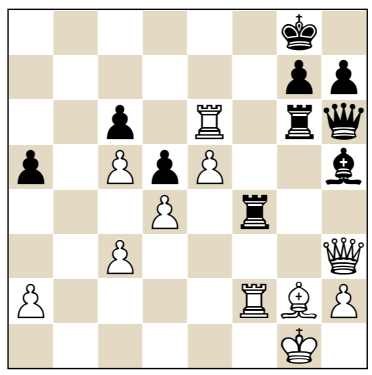
4. Piorun-Petrosian
Aeroflot Open 2018

25...♗xe5! Here White opted for 26.♗d4 ♗xd4 27.♖xd4 ♖b4 and eventually lost in the ending. Black had to have foreseen **26.♘c4 ♖b4+! 27.♘xe5 ♖ab8!**, forcing 28.♖h4 to avoid checkmate.



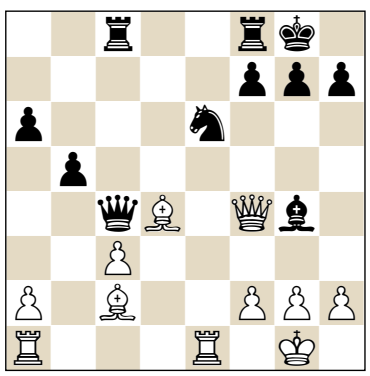
5. Lou Yiping-Goriatchkin
Gibraltar 2018

29.♖xe4! ♖xf3 Or 29...♖ef8 30.♕xf6 ♖xf6 31.♖xf6 dxe4 32.♖f8+!. **30.♖xe8+ ♔f7 31.♖f8+! ♔xf8 32.♘e6+** The same motif! Black soon resigned.



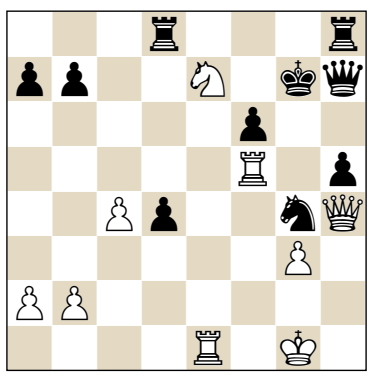
6. Kvisla-Tarjan
Gibraltar 2018

28...♖xg2+! 29.♖xg2 29.♕xg2 ♖xf2 or 29.♔xg2 ♖xf2+ 30.♔xf2 ♕f4+ and 31...♗g4 lose a piece. **29...♖f1+! 30.♔xf1 ♗e2+ 31.♔g1** If 31.♔xe2 ♕xh3, attacking both rooks. **31...♕xh3** and Black won.



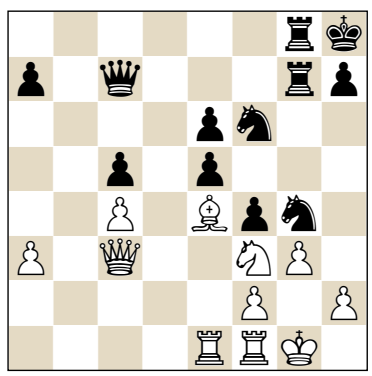
7. A.Muzychuk-Venkatesh
Gibraltar 2018

23.♕e4! 23.♕xg4 ♘xd4 24.♗xh7+ is not much. **23...♗f5!?** 23...g6 loses to 24.♗b3. **24.♕xf5 g6** Here 25.♕f6 ♘xd4 led to a draw. White missed the stunning **25.♕xe6! fxe6 26.♗b3 ♕c7 27.♖xe6!**, winning decisive material.



8. Prasanna-Papp
Gibraltar 2018

Instead of playing 32.♖e4? White could have crashed through with **32.♖xf6! ♘xf6 33.♖f1! ♖df8 34.♕g5+ ♔f7 35.♘d5!** (this retreat makes it all clear) **35...♕e4 36.♕xf6+ ♔e8 37.♕xh8! ♖xh8 38.♘f6+** and wins.



9. Morozov-Minasian
Yerevan 2018

28...♘xh2! 29.♔xh2 If 29.♘xh2 fxg3, winning material. **29...fxg3+ 30.fxg3** 30.♔g1 gxf2+ 31.♔xf2 ♖g2+ 32.♔e3 ♘g4+ 33.♔d3 ♖d8+. **30...♖xg3 31.♕xe5** Now 31...♕g7 is met by 32.♔h1!. But Black played **31...♖3g5!!** and White resigned.

SHORT

TWITTERATI

It is not often that I give credit to Susan Polgar, but I must acknowledge her indispensable role in my apostolic conversion on the subject of social media back in 2013. No sooner had I arrived in the Arctic city of Tromsø, to commentate on the second half of the FIDE World Cup, than the unabashed self-promoter, whom I was about to replace, schmoozed up to the esteemed editor of New In Chess, Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, to compliment him on the wonderful magazine. It would be the most perfect publication, she gushed, were it not for those obscene articles, unsuitable for children, from that licentious columnist from England. And though she might not have requested directly that I be sacked forthwith, that was undoubtedly the sentiment she conveyed.

It was intriguing to observe Ms. Polgar's stint as a commentator. The sessions would begin with the press officer – her husband Paul Truong – snapping dozens of photos of his wife in action, to be used later, primarily on her own website rather than for the benefit of the tournament which was employing them both. While talking live on air, Polgar could miraculously tweet simultaneously from her account, without even using her hands. Alas, this source of wonderment had a mundane, rather than supernatural, explanation: a domineering active spouse, with a laptop, who apparently knew her mind far better than she did herself.

It was no secret that Polgar wished to cover the entire event and was greatly piqued when I took over with Dirk Jan. The change of personnel coincided, to the minute, with the decision by the press officer to ignore the studio and instead photograph the action in the playing hall – invariably with his wife standing in the background. Indeed, Frederic Friedel from ChessBase once remarked with mocking, mirthful admiration at Ms. Polgar's extraordinary ability to position herself perfectly, with or without the permission of others, so as to be visually recorded, for posterity, to advantage.

Such vanity, while risible, is relatively harmless. Unfortunately, the same could not be said of the couple's deliberate attempts to sabotage our official broadcasts. Instructions had been issued to usher in the players to the studio, immediately after the games, to give their fresh impressions to the many thousands of online viewers. When their appearance was unexpectedly delayed by several minutes, the show's producer, Macauley Peterson, was incensed to discover they had been intercepted by Susan Polgar to conduct an interview of her own.

That evening, when confronted by Macauley, an ostensibly contrite Susan Polgar claimed that the impropriety was accidental – an unintentional gaffe. That profound insincerity was exposed when she committed precisely the same offence the following day and the day afterwards, despite repeated complaints, until the organisers eventually put a stop to it. The unprofessionalism and

'Needless to say, none of this offended anyone except the followers of Polgar's trashy website, who bleat in chorus when encouraged to do so.'

naked malevolence of the duo continued with tweets attacking me for mentioning, on air, that the hotel had no laundry service (an insult to our hosts, allegedly) and for asking our guest Eva Repkova about her former boyfriend Vladimir Kramnik. Needless to say, none of this offended anyone except the followers of Polgar's trashy website, who bleat in chorus when encouraged to do so.

This set me thinking: it is extremely difficult to combat a swirling torrent of invective and condemnation unless you have a media outlet of your own. So tightly censored is Polgar's blog and twitter account by the indefatigable Truong that contrary opinion, if it can be posted at all, survives no longer than an astronaut in a punctured spacesuit. As websites require constant maintenance, and my spouse has better things to do with her life than to laud my every action with bombastic, magniloquent oratory, the unctuous uxor option was not available. Twitter it had to be.

For years I had looked in perplexity at this medium. What was the point? With such a tight limit on characters one barely has space to say anything. And why should one 'follow' others anyway? Steadily though, the forum grew on me. After a few false starts, I gradually learned to

make the odd pithy comment and was rewarded with the satisfaction of a growing audience, which now numbers a respectable, but by no means massive, 26k+. What I had not previously appreciated was to what extent traditional journalism has come in the modern era to depend upon the Twittersphere. Why should a harassed hack bother with the effort of researching stories if he can simply fill column inches with quotes instead? As media outlets tend to copy from each other, it becomes possible to surf the wave of global coverage with a single catchy tweet – as I first discovered after posting a photo of myself as the solo passenger on an Air Zimbabwe flight.

It is not only the orthographically-challenged U.S. President who has realised the potency of the short message, but quite a few chess players too. For the World Champion (185k followers) it presents the opportunity to reach out to his fans but also, conveniently, to sell them his new Magnus Trainer for Android. However, Twitter is much more than a handy commercial marketing tool: no less importantly, it can also be used to deliver withering retorts to uppity colleagues. After recent goading from Anish Giri (38.7k followers), Magnus – who is by no means a prolific tweeter – lashed back with the stinging rebuke:

'Come on, that is just weak. Win a tournament for the first time in your life, and maybe people will start taking you seriously.'

While not strictly accurate (Anish has, of course, won several tournaments), the exaggeration pointedly drew attention to the Dutchman's paucity of elite trophies. Hikaru Nakamura (65.9k) chipped in:

'Finally, somebody gets fed up with @anishgiri and all of his ridiculous tweets!'

Anish responded to Magnus with a strategic retreat, but not before throwing a parting pebble:

'Don't know about people, but you seem to be taking me seriously..!'

Maybe, but only in the sense one takes a swatted fly seriously. Magnus' brutal put-down has subsequently entered chess parlance, with even the gentle Vidit Gujrathi publicly teasing Anish with the same jibe lately.

A person's profile gives a good indication how he or she would like to be perceived. Nakamura styles himself as a 'professional chess player and investor/trader'. Perhaps it would be a tad hypocritical for a man who previously described himself as an 'olive farmer' to raise an eyebrow questioningly at the latter term. I do, in fact, own a small field full of olive trees and have even been known to harvest them, but the appellation was intended more in jest than as an accurate designation. I am not so sure Hikaru is joking.

The size of an individual's following, while providing a rough approximation, does not always reliably give an indication of his or her importance. Numbers can be inflated by fair or foul means. For a start, they can even be purchased. One might expect the Norwegian chess-god to

'As media outlets tend to copy from each other, it becomes possible to surf the wave of global coverage with a single catchy tweet.'

head the ranking list, but his 'fan-base' – to use the term loosely – is eclipsed by that of Natalia Pogonina (241k). Notwithstanding the fact that the clear majority of chess players are male, who generally like looking at images of attractive females (her pinned tweet is of an allegedly 'revealing' photo-shoot, from 2013: it isn't really, by the way), this seems surprising – particularly given the bland nature of her posts, and that she is not, and has never been, world champion. One may be on the path to solving the mystery, however, after discovering that she 'follows' over 80,000 accounts herself. Obviously, no normal person does this, which would lead this particular amateur Sherlock Holmes to suspect a computer algorithm.

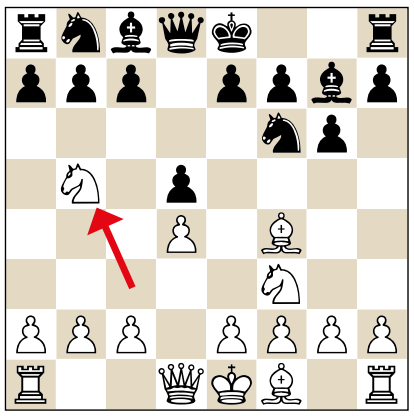
Alexandra Kosteniuk (271k), lest my memory fails me, also used to follow an absurdly implausible number of accounts. These have now, apparently, been culled to a very manageable 146. But one chess player, with a huge following, who has no need for puffery or massaging of statistics is Garry Kasparov (421k). For comparison, that is 415,000 more than the inveterate publicity-seeker who trounced him in the 2014 FIDE Presidential Election. Garry's profile states 'Chairman of the Human Rights Foundation (@HRF). Visiting Fellow at Oxford Martin. Author, speaker, 13th World Chess Champion'. The order reveals his current priorities. You will find plenty of tweets about Putin, politics and artificial intelligence: little, alas for the poor chess fan, about our beautiful game.

Nigel Short

Play like a Patzer

Aronian's tiebreak system

Jeroen Bosch



5.♘b5!?

'There is more to this Patzer move than meets the eye.'

It can be useful to have a surprise system up your sleeve for special occasions. At the Gibraltar Masters, Levon Aronian was involved in a tiebreak with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Just the right moment to pull a rabbit out of your hat: in this case, Aronian's special version of the Barry Attack. Pretty soon, the Armenian had a positional edge, which he converted seemingly effortlessly. It's not clear, though, whether the French top player was all that surprised, since he had faced the same system against the same opponent before! Let's see what it's all about.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♘c3

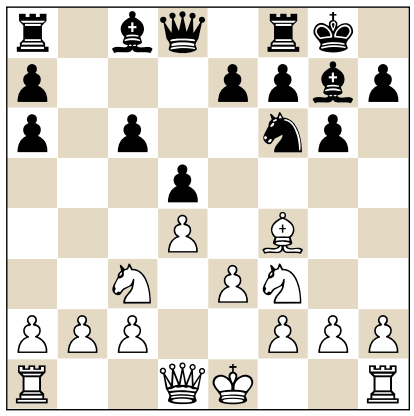
Ah, avoiding both the Grünfeld and the King's Indian! If you want to play in this way, you have to be ready for the classical Pirc that would arise after 3...♗g7 4.e4 d6. Not many Black players will opt for 3...c5, which leads to a Schmidt Benoni after 4.d5. There is only one way to 'punish' White for his third move, to wit:

3...d5 Preventing e2-e4 and staking a claim in the centre.

4.♗f4 ♗g7 And here Aronian likes to play the crude **5.♘b5!?** forcing Black to move his queen's knight to the edge of the board.

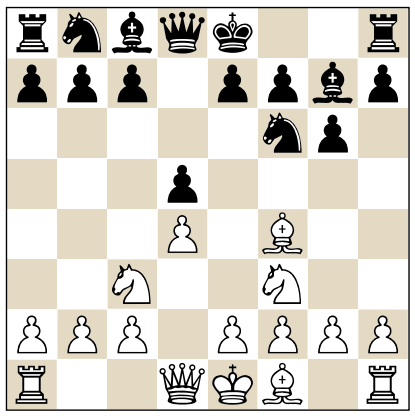
Let's just see what happened in Aronian-Vachier-Lagrave, Gibraltar 2018, first, before I explain why there is more to this Patzer move than meets the eye.

5...♘a6 6.e3 c6 7.♘c3 Vachier-Lagrave now castled, which is a positional error, because after **7...0-0 8.♗xa6! bxa6**



Black has a bad structure, while his light-squared bishop (which ought to compensate him) is a liability as well. Play continued **9.h3** Avoiding ...♗g4 (9.♘e5!?±). **9...♘d7 10.0-0 ♗b7 11.♘a4 ♖c8** Black should strive for counterplay with 11...c5 12.♘xc5 ♘xc5 13.dxc5 ♖c8. **12.b4** Now that ...c5 has been prevented Black is clearly worse. **12...a5 13.♘c5 ♘xc5 14.bxc5 ♗a6 15.♖e1 a4?! 16.♕d2 ♗b5 17.e4! dxe4 18.♖xe4 ♗c4 19.♗h6 ♗xh6 20.♕xh6 f6 21.♘d2 ♗d5 22.♖e3 ♖b8 23.c4 ♗f7 24.♖e4 g5 25.♖ae1** With a superior position in Aronian-Vachier-Lagrave, Gibraltar 2018 (tiebreak 2.4, 1-0, 50).

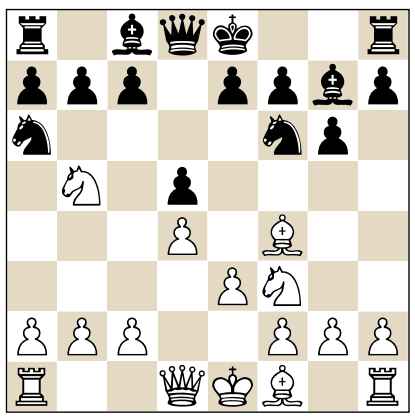
We have seen a successful example of 5.♘b5, let's briefly return to the position after Black's fourth move.



Most popular now is the so-called Barry Attack with 5.e3 0-0 (5...c6 6.h3 0-0 will transpose to Variation II below) 6.♗e2. White's play is not as innocuous as it looks. See, for example, 6...b6?! 7.♘e5 c5 8.h4! ♗b7 9.h5 ♘c6 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.♗b5!, which has been known to be bad for Black since at least Murshed-Rogers, Hong Kong 1984 (and the Australian GM soon started to successfully play this with White). The main theoretical problem for White, though, is 6...c5 7.♘e5 ♘c6, which shouldn't promise him a realistic chance for an opening edge. We will see that this is the main reason why Aronian's 5.♘b5 is so clever.

Now that we have become acquainted with the 'traditional' way of playing this line, let's return to our SOS subject 5.♘b5.

Black is forced to play **5...♘a6 6.e3**



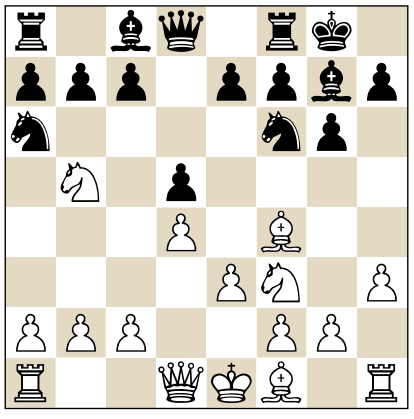
And now we will study both 6...0-0 (Variation I) and 6...c6 (Variation II).

Variation I

6...0-0

In this move order I will concentrate on ...♘a6-c7, while after the immediate 6...c6 (Variation II) I will focus on ...♘a6-b8. Obviously, 6...c6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.h3 and 6...0-0 7.h3 c6 8.♘c3 simply lead us to the same position, but there are some alternatives along each way.

7.h3 This is how Aronian plays this position. Others have also tried 7.♗e2 and 7.c4.

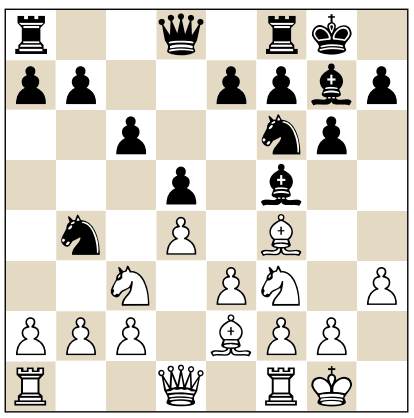


7...c6 Chasing away the annoying knight. Practice has also seen:

– 7...♗d7 8.♗e2 c5 9.c3 ♕a5 10.a4 c4 11.♘d2 ♗xb5?! 12.axb5 ♕xb5 13.b3!, with excellent positional compensation for the pawn in K.Alekseenko-Belyakov, Sochi 2017.

– 7...c5 may look active, but the black knight now remains glued to the edge of the board for a considerable time: 8.c3 ♕b6 (8...♗f5 9.♗e2 cxd4 10.exd4 ♘e4 11.0-0, and White has a very favourable version of a London System – the knight is really stuck on a6, Gareyev-Costello, Irvine 2016) 9.a4 ♘e4 10.♗d3 ♗d7 11.♘e5 (11.0-0) 11...♗e8 12.♗xe4 dxe4 13.♘c4 ♕d8 14.d5!, with a good game in Rmus-Popovic, Obrenovac 2004. In case of 14...♗xb5 15.axb5 ♘c7, White goes 16.♗xc7 ♕xc7 17.d6 exd6 18.♕xd6, with an edge.

– Playable is 7...♗f5 8.♗e2 c6 9.♘c3 ♘b4 10.0-0



And now:

10...c5 (Kjartansson-Petursson, Reykjavik 2017), and here 11.dxc5 ♗xc2 12.♕d2 ♗f5 13.♖ad1 yields White a slight but pleasant edge.

Black can also take a pawn on move 10, but 10...♘xc2 11.♖c1 ♘b4 12.g4 ♗c8 (12...♗e4 13.♘e5!) 13.a3 ♘a6 14.♗xa6 bxa6 15.♘e5 favours White.

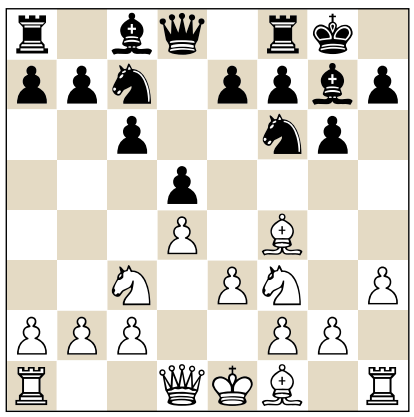
Possible is 10...♗xc2 11.♕d2 ♗f5 12.a3 ♘a6 13.♗xa6 bxa6 14.♕e2, when White has enough for the pawn, but objectively not much more. But his play is still simpler than Black's: put a rook on the c-file and knights on c5 and e5.

– 7...♘e4 8.♗e2 c5 (8...c6 9.♘c3 ♕a5 10.0-0 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♕xc3 12.♖b1 c5 13.♖b3 ♕a5 14.c4, with enough activity for the pawn) 9.0-0 ♕b6 10.a4 c4 11.b3! cxb3 12.c4 dxc4 13.♗xc4, with an obvious advantage in Fedoseev-Ronka, Antalya 2017.

8.♘c3 ♘c7

So while White has wasted two tempi (♘c3-b5-c3), Black has made use of the time gained by playing ...c6, and ...♘b8-a6-c7. The problem is that the knight is not really well-placed here, and together with ...c6 Black's position gives a solid but rather passive impression (for 8...♘b8, see 6...c6).

White now has to make up his mind about where to put his kingside bishop.



9.♗e2

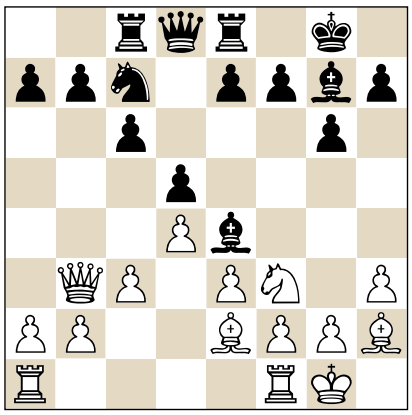
Earlier Aronian had played 9.♗d3, when 9...♘d7 10.0-0 ♖e8 11.e4 dxe4 12.♗xe4 ♘e6 13.♗e3 ♘f6 14.♗d3 b6 15.♖e1 favoured White somewhat in Aronian-Svidler, Berlin blitz 2015.

Likewise, 9...♘e6 10.♗e5 c5 11.0-0 b6 12.♘b1!? ♗b7 13.c3 ♕d7 14.a4 a6 15.♗h2 ♘e4 16.♘bd2 ♘6g5 17.♘xg5 ♘xg5 18.b4 c4 19.♗c2 was a touch better for White in Feller-Poghosyan, Heusenstamm 2015. As was 9...a5 10.0-0 b5 11.♖e1 ♘e6 12.♗e5 ♗a6 13.a3 in Grischuk-Cheparinov, Berlin blitz 2015.

9...♗f5

Black was fine after 9...b6 10.0-0 ♗b7 11.♗h2 c5 12.a4 a5 13.♘e5 ♘d7 14.♘xd7 ♕xd7 15.♗g4 e6 16.♕d2 ♗c6, although White also won this tiebreak game in Aronian-Vachier-Lagrave, Tbilisi 2017 (6.9).

10.0-0 ♖c8 11.♗h2 ♘e4 12.♘xe4 ♗xe4 13.c3 ♖e8 14.♕b3



A symmetrical position without weaknesses for either side. Still, Black's awkward knight on c7 means that White has something to play for.

14...♖b8 15.♘e5 ♗f5 16.♖fd1 ♗e6 17.♖ac1 ♕c8 18.c4

White has made progress in the centre, and all his pieces are more actively placed.

18...♖a8 19.cxd5 ♗xd5 20.♕a3 f6 21.♘d3 e5 22.dxe5 fxe5 23.♘c5 b6 24.e4 24.♗g4!, followed by 25.e4, would have spelled trouble for Black. **24...♗f7 25.♘d7 c5 26.♕c3?!** 26.b4!. **26...♖e7?** 26...♘d5 or 26...♘e6. **27.♗xe5 ♗xa2 28.♗xg7 ♖xd7 29.♗h6**

And White is completely winning, but somehow failed to convert in another nerve-wracking game from their epic 2017 World Cup tiebreak, Aronian-Vachier-Lagrave, Tbilisi 2017 (6.7).

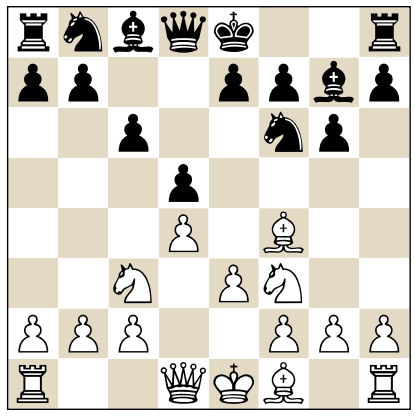
In all the examples we have seen, White's edge from the opening wasn't all that big – in fact, it was often negligible – but the knight was always awkward on c7. Reason enough for Black to place the steed on its original square in our next line.

Variation II

6...c6

Immediately chasing the knight back to where it came from.

7.♘c3 ♘b8

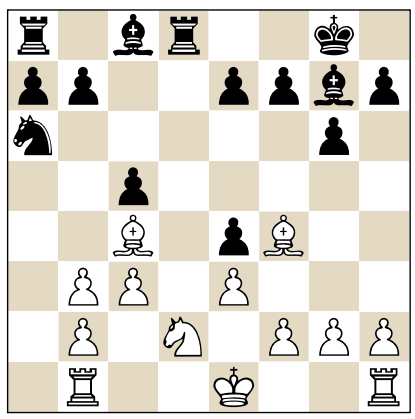


This transposes to a regular Barry Attack (5.e3 c6), as we have noted above! Aronian's clever 5.♘b5 means that Black cannot play the most active line (with ...c7-c5). Note that we have already seen what happens when Black allows 7...0-0 8.♗xa6!.

Some alternatives:

– 7...♕a5 is best met by 8.♘d2 ♘h5 9.♘b3 ♕b6 10.♗g5.

– 7...♕b6 8.♖b1 ♘e4 9.♘xe4 dxe4 10.♘d2 c5 11.d5 0-0 12.c3 ♖d8, and now 13.♕b3! (13.♗c4 ♘c7!, Jepson-Pedersen, Copenhagen 2001) 13...♕xb3 14.axb3 ♖xd5 15.♗c4 ♖d8



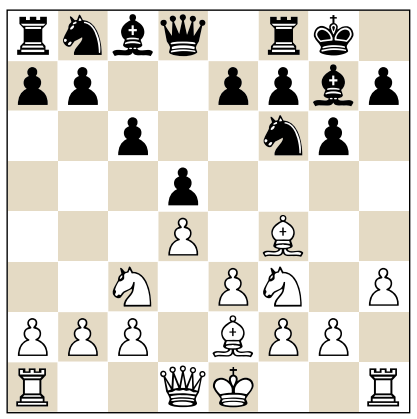
and this endgame favours White if he finds the nice rook moves 16.♖a1! (avoiding a pin: 16.♘xe4 ♗f5!) 16...♗f5 17.♖g1! (avoiding a second pin: 17.h3 ♘b8 18.g4 ♗d7 19.♘xe4 ♗c6) 17...♘b8 (17...h5 18.h3 h4 19.g4 hxg3 20.fxg3, followed by 21.g4; note 20...♗xh3? 21.g4+−) 18.g4 ♗d7 19.♘xe4, and Black is in serious trouble. – 7...♕b6 8.♖b1 ♗g4 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♗xf3! 11.♗xf3, Bukal-Bratovic, Zadar 2017, and now 11...♘d7 12.e4 dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘c7 is hardly anything for White. Black is planning ...e5.

8.h3

Aronian's favourite little move to preserve the dark-squared bishop, and of course natural fare for every player of the London System.

8...0-0 9.♗e2

Modest, but usually the bishop is better placed on e2. White got nothing in an Internet blitz game Aronian-Grischuk (2016) after 9.♗d3 c5 10.0-0 b6 11.♘e5 ♗b7 12.♗h2 ♘c6 13.♗b5 ♖c8 14.♖e1 e6 15.♘xc6 ♗xc6 16.♗a6 ♖a8 17.a4 ♕e7 18.♘b5 until Grischuk missed White's threat 18...♗b7? 19.♗d6, winning an exchange.



9...♘bd7

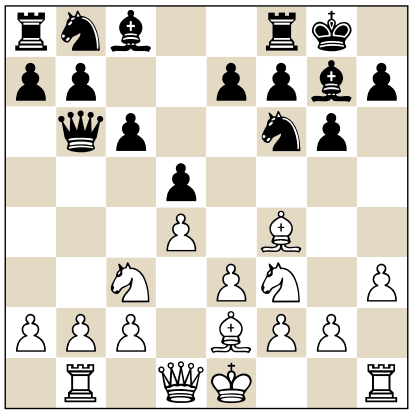
■ Black can play 9...c5, but at least he now has 'officially' lost a tempo (...c7-c6-c5). White has the useful tempo h2-h3 extra. This may not mean the world, but at least something has been achieved on top of taking your opponent out of his Grünfeld or KI comfort zone. Grischuk twice played 9...c5 in an Internet blitz match against Aronian.

– 10.0-0 cxd4 11.exd4 ♘c6 12.♘e5 ♗f5 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♘a4 (14.♕d2!?) 14...♘d7 15.c3 was about equal in Aronian-Grischuk, Internet blitz 2016. An important alternative is 12...♕b6 13.♘xc6 bxc6 (or 13...♕xc6 14.♗b5 ♕b6 15.a4) 14.♘a4, which is actually a

well-known position from the regular Barry Attack. In Aronian's version, White has an additional tempo: h2-h3. This is a modest achievement, but sometimes it's the little things that count! A model game from White's point of view in the regular Barry is Hebden-Nunn, Hastings 1996/97.

– 10.dxc5 ♘bd7 11.0-0 ♘xc5 12.♗e5 was the other Aronian-Grischuk Internet blitz game from 2016. Again it isn't much, but to emphasize once more: in the regular move order they all play h2-h3 at some stage, and that means that White has a useful additional tempo!

■ 9...♕b6 10.♖b1, and here you might well like to study two Hebden efforts:

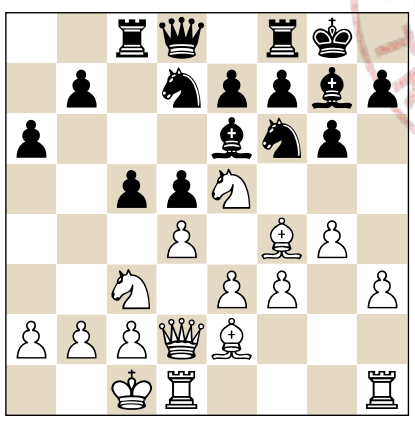


– 10...c5 11.♘b5! ♘c6 Hebden-Van den Doel, Escaldes 1998, and now 12.♗c7 ♕a6 13.dxc5 favours White.

– 10...♘fd7 11.0-0 ♘a6 12.b4! ♕d8 13.e4 dxe4 14.♘xe4 b6 15.d5! c5 16.a3 with a considerable plus in Hebden-Guidarelli, France 1999.

■ Rather slow is 9...b6, and now both 10.g4 ♖e8 11.g5 ♘fd7 12.h4 e5 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 15.dxe5 ♖xe5 16.♕d4 ♕e7 17.0-0-0 Blatny-Lechtynsky, Brno 1990, and 10.h4 ♗g4 11.♘e5 ♗xe2 12.♕xe2 ♕c8 13.0-0-0 ♘bd7 14.f3 e6 15.g4, Hebden-O'Connell, Bunratty 2000, are clearly in White's favour.

■ In case of 9...♗f5, it pays off to study the blitz play of the World Champion: 10.♘e5 (10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♕c1 ♖e8 12.♗h2 ♘e4 13.♘xe4 ♗xe4 14.♘g5 ♗f5 15.g4 e5! was sharp and unclear in Aronian-Giri, Stavanger blitz 2017) 10...♘bd7 11.g4 ♗e6 12.f3 c5 13.♕d2 ♖c8 14.0-0-0 a6



15.h4 h5 16.♘xd7 ♕xd7 17.gxh5 (perhaps the immediate 17.♗e5 is even more accurate) 17...♘xh5 18.♗e5, and Black's position is more difficult to play; Carlsen-Salem, Doha blitz 2016.

10.0-0 b5

Gaining space on the queenside makes sense. At least Black is taking advantage of the fact that he has had to play ...c6.

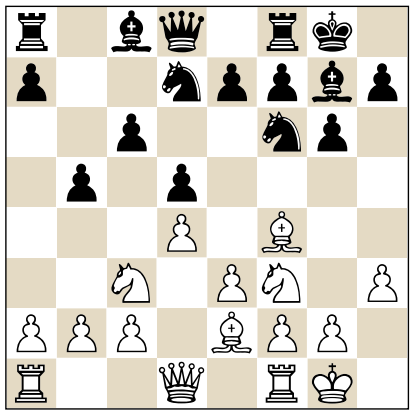
– Not 10...a6?! 11.a4 c5 12.a5!±, Tregubov-Kozul, Doha 2016.

– 10...♖e8 11.a4 a5 12.♗h2 ♘b6 13.♗d3 ♗f5 14.♗xf5 gxf5 15.♘e5 was a little something in Ftacnik-Heinemann, Hamburg 1998.

– 10...♘e8 has been played a couple of times, but it allows 11.e4 dxe4 12.♘xe4±.

– Now that White has castled, 10...b6 does not run into a fast h2-h4 type of attack, and is therefore playable: 11.a4 a5 (Malaniuk-Aronian, Batumi 1999).

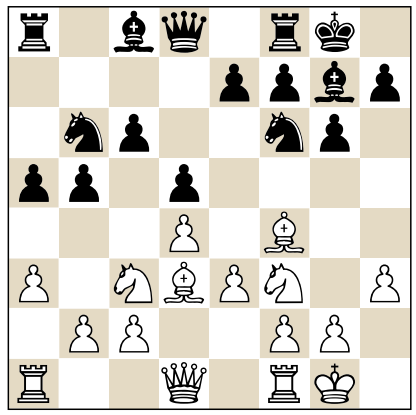
– White was better after 10...♘e4 11.♘xe4 dxe4 12.♘d2 f5 13.f3 exf3 14.♘xf3 in Stefanova-Bodnaruk, Riyadh blitz 2017.



11.a3

There is something to be said for 11.a4 b4 12.♘a2, when White claims that Black has only weakened his queenside. After 12...a5 13.c3 ♕b6 (better is 13...bxc3) 14.cxb4 axb4 (Puuska-Pavlidou, Reykjavik 2015), White should have played 15.♕b3!, when Black should sacrifice a pawn with 15...c5 16.dxc5 ♘xc5 17.♕xb4 ♘fd7. Another option is 11.♘b1!?, to opt for a London set-up with c2-c3 and ♘b1-d2. Again White's claim would be that ...b5 weakens the queenside somewhat.

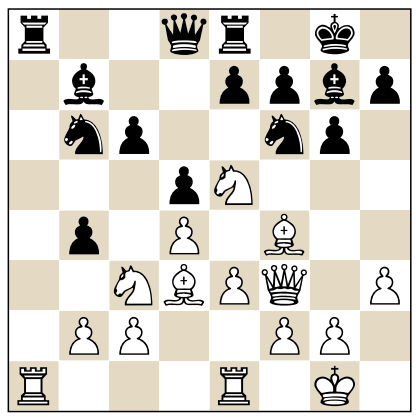
11...a5 12.♗d3 ♘b6



Please note that 13.e4 can be met by 13...♘a4!, the point being 14.♘xa4 dxe4.

If now 13.♘e5, then 13...♗b7 14.♖e1 ♘fd7, and Black had comfortable equality in Nigalidze-Kantans, Kazan 2013.

White should therefore renew the threat of e3-e4 with **13.♖e1 ♖e8** Or 13...♗b7 14.e4!? b4 15.e5. **14.♘e5** Interestingly, White changes tack: 14.e4 b4 15.axb4 axb4 16.♖xa8 ♘xa8 17.♘a4 dxe4 18.♗xe4 ♘xe4 19.♖xe4±. **14...♗b7 15.♕f3 b4 16.axb4 axb4**



Now **17.♖xa8 ♕xa8 18.♘e2** was equal in Grandelius-Kantans, Tallinn 2016. However, 17.♘a2! would have favoured White. ■

REYKJAVIK

The Spirit of Fischer

Adhiban Baskaran wins Reykjavik Open

What was it that inspired the winner of the Reykjavik Open? The change of the tournament's name to Bobby Fischer Memorial in honour of one of his heroes? The spot on the Indian national Olympiad team that he was fighting for? Or the teasing question by his friend Erwin l'Ami how many times he had claimed first place in his career? It was all of this, of course, as **ADHIBAN BASKARAN** describes vividly in a highly personal (what else would you expect?) account.

It was the year 2015 when I came across the New In Chess cover featuring Erwin l'Ami after his spectacular 8½/10 win in Reykjavik (a victory with a round to spare!). I remember thinking to myself that it would be nice to have my picture on the cover, and I made a mental note that winning Reykjavik was one way to do it! But of course I found another way to do it when my shared third place in the 2017 Tata Masters resulted in another epic NIC cover! (issue 2017/2, if you want to check!) True, it is always good to have a contingency plan in place.

Nevertheless I was very excited to play in Iceland this year, since it was the place where one of my childhood heroes, Bobby Fischer, became World Champion! His book *My 60 Memorable Games* was one of the first books I read when I started learning chess (the other being *Attack with Mikhail Tal*, but more on that in a later article ☺), and it was really captivating and full of amazing games. Some years later, *Russians vs Fischer* became another of my favourites. It was fascinating to read how he battled the entire Russian contingent and came out on top (inspiring stuff!).

As we all know, Fischer spent his final years in Iceland and died there in 2008. This year, on the occasion of what would have been his 75th birthday, the Reykjavik Open was renamed Fischer Memorial to honour his memory.

A further major motivation for me to win this event was the fact

What better place to draw inspiration? Adhiban Baskaran in the quiet corner of the Bókin bookshop in the centre of Reykjavik where Bobby Fischer spent many hours reading during the final years of his life in Iceland.

ALINA L'AMI

that there was a major battle going on for the final spot in the Indian Olympiad team (the other four are more or less decided). And my dear friends who are fighting with me for the spot, Sethuraman and Ganguly, had already overtaken me in the rating list... Hence my last hope was this event!

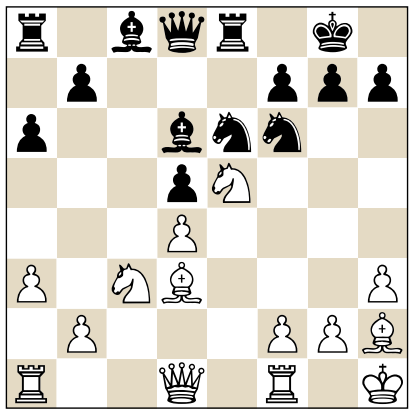
The top names in the field included Richard Rapport, Pavel Eljanov, Gata Kamsky and yours truly (I don't know how to be modest ☺). The venue was once again the beautiful Harpa Concert Hall, which is next to the sea, and at times I would stare blankly into the sea and feel at peace. It is good news that the contract for the tournament to be held at Harpa has been extended for three more years, and I would really recommend those who have never been there to visit Iceland! The weather is really pleasant and this is coming from a guy who lives in one of the hottest places in the world, Chennai.

Inspiring walks

All invited players were given coupons that they could use in a variety of nice restaurants. The hotel where everyone stayed was a five-minute walk from the venue, which gave all the players a good excuse to get some nice exercise in... both before the games and after them! My schedule before the game would be to have a nice lunch with the l'Ami family (Erwin and Alina), return to my room to rest a bit and then go to the venue, which meant more walks, but I was hoping to cash in on the advice from a former Reykjavik Open winner!

I started with a very modest 2 out of 3, and during one of our walks Erwin asked, 'So, AD, how many tournaments have you won?' To my horror I realized it was so few I could literally count them on one hand... I just hated that fact, and I swore to myself: 'Fine!! I will win some more.' And that's how it all started... This happened in Round 4.

Adhiban Baskaran
Eivind Olav Risting
Reykjavik 2018 (4)

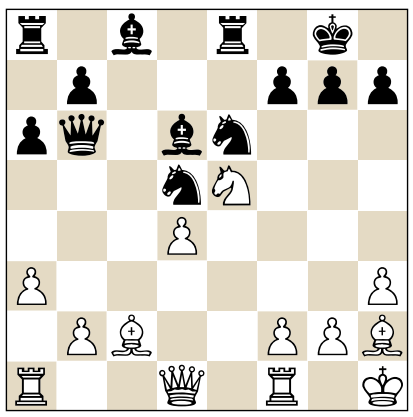


position after 17...♘e6

18.♗c2!? I had been preparing a funny trick with my preparatory moves ♔h1 and ♗c2.

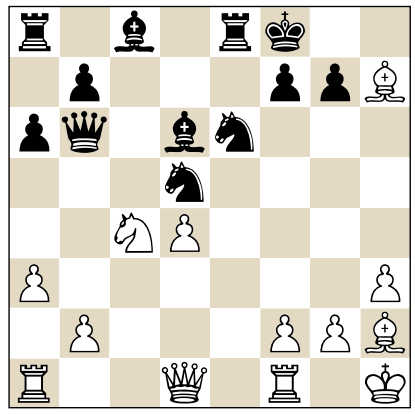
'I just hated that fact, and I swore to myself: "Fine!! I will win some more." And that's how it all started...'

18...♕b6 And he fell for the main cheapo!!
19.♘xd5! ♘xd5 19...♕xd4 won't help either: 20.♘xf6+ gxf6 21.♘xf7! ♗xh2 22.♕h5!, winning on the spot.



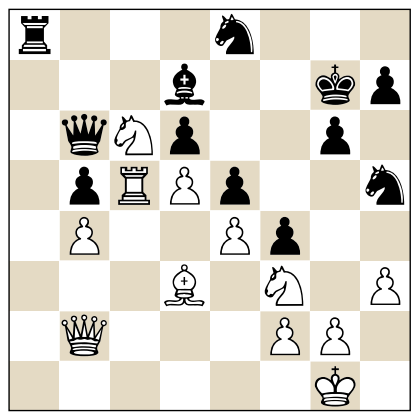
20.♗xh7+! 20.♘c4 ♕xd4 is not so bad for Black compared to what happens in the game.
20...♔f8 Or 20...♔xh7 21.♕h5+, and I collect most of Black's material.

And after 20...♔h8 comes 21.♕h5! ♗xe5 22.♗g6+ ♔g8 23.♗xf7+ ♔f8 24.♗xe8, winning.
21.♘c4



21...♕xd4
21...♗xh2 22.♘xb6 ♘xb6 23.♔xh2 is also sad for Black, as he will never be able to win the h7-bishop without giving up a piece of his own.
22.♗xd6+ ♘e7 23.♕xd4 ♘xd4 24.♘b6 ♗e6 24...♖a7 runs into 25.♗c5!?, with huge material gains.
25.♘xa8 ♖xa8 26.♖ad1 ♘dc6 27.♗e4 Black resigned. After this game I was pretty much unstoppable and went on to win five games (including this one) in a row!

However, the biggest upset of Round 4 was provided by Johann Hjartarson. Yes, the same guy who battled the Magician from Riga and fell victim to the legendary 36.♖c5!! (in Tal-Hjartarson, 1987, also played in Reykjavik!).



Tal-Hjartarson
Reykjavik 1987
position after 36.♖c5

But of course Hjartarson is first and foremost remembered for his victory

over Viktor Kortchnoi in the 1988 Candidates. I happily interrupt my Icelandic tale for his notes to his win against Pavel Eljanov and his thoughts on his recent return to chess (as an amateur) after he left professional chess many years ago to pursue a legal career.

NOTES BY
Johann Hjartarson

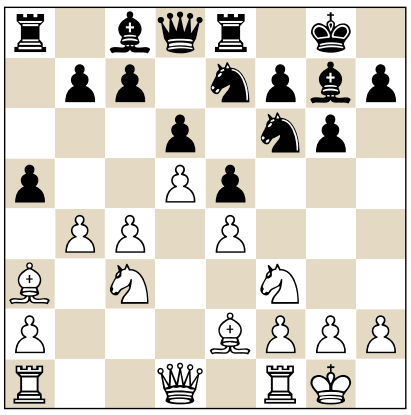
Pavel Eljanov
Johann Hjartarson
Reykjavik 2018 (4)
King's Indian Defence, Bayonet Attack

The writer of these notes is a player who left professional chess over 20 years ago at the top of his game for a regular career in law. In fact, I had not played a full-length tournament for 17 years (with one exception) when I picked up the thread again three years ago. The triggering event was the 2016 European Team Championship in Reykjavik. As the host had the privilege of sending two teams, the Icelandic Chess Federation decided that the second team would consist of yours truly and my old Olympiad teammates from the 1980s and 90s, Helgi Olafsson, Margeir Petursson, Jon Arnason, as well as our living legend Fridrik Olafsson, who was one of the top players in the world from the late 1950s until he assumed the role of FIDE president in 1978. I played a few tournaments in preparation with pretty disastrous results, but then it gradually came seeping back. I enjoyed playing to the extent that I just could not stop and have gone on taking part in a few tournaments a year ever since. Needless to say, it is not easy to assume the new role of an amateur player, and one has to adopt a new frame of mind in which it is all about the fun and any illusions of good results must take a back seat. Reminiscing on a glorious past will just be a source of frustration. It goes without saying that my old 2640 rating from the inactive list went quickly down the drain and positive results against so-called 'weaker players' were by no means guaranteed. It seems to me that the absolute playing strength has increased in tandem with the inflation in the rating system.

Occasionally, though, one can play a decent game like in the good old days, or even win a tournament, like the surprise I encountered last year when I won the Nordic Zonal, qualifying for the World Cup in Tbilisi, where I was... the oldest player out of 128 at the tender age of 55 and got duly knocked out in the first round by Navara. Hmm...

The following game from the Reykjavik Open served as a pleasant déjà vu when I managed a decent game against a much stronger player, a positive reminder to me and possibly others that in the royal game of chess anything can happen after all.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 a5 10.♗a3 ♖e8



This strange-looking move has been the pet line of the young Argentinian GM Perez Ponsa, who has employed it on several occasions, either in this particular position, as he did against me at the 2016 Baku Olympiad, or by inserting 10...axb4 first, which seems less exact – for more details see René Olthof's survey in Yearbook 124. The latent idea is to close the queenside with ...c5, which leaves White with rather limited chances of a typical queenside offensive, and moving the action to the centre or the kingside, which generally favours Black. On the downside, it

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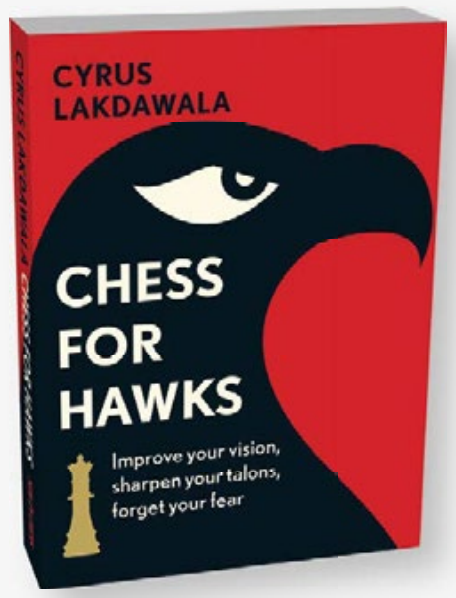

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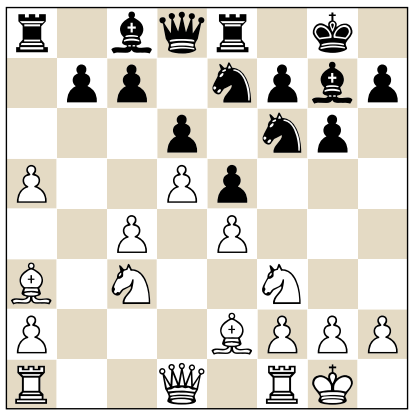
LENNART OOTES

Johann Hjartarson is about to play 23...♕h4! in his game against Pavel Eljanov that ended in a sensational victory for the Icelander. 'A positive reminder to me and possibly others that in the royal game of chess anything can happen after all.'

comes at the cost of two tempi, since the black rook is not of much use on e8 and will eventually need to move back to f8 to support the typical ...f7-f5 thrust. White's alternative of taking en passant on c6 often proves to open the centre in Black's favour.

Jan Timman once told me that if someone surprised him with a clever idea in the opening, he would be ready to use it against someone else later. This requires the ability to play almost any given opening, as Jan always did with either colour, which must be considered a great asset in the new age of massive computer preparation. My humble opinion is that the element of surprise in the opening is vastly underestimated nowadays, even amongst the world elite – not to mention the fact that having different openings unfold rather than seeing yet another Berlin Wall is much more likely to please the crowd, if that counts for anything... On this occasion I tried my best, even though I am no expert in the KID. It seems that 10...♖e8 took Eljanov by surprise, since he spent a lot of time on the next few moves, which gave me a substantial advantage on the clock that lasted throughout the game.

11.bxa5

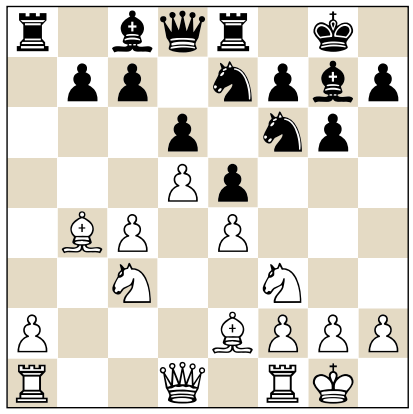


11...♖xa5?!

Played without thinking. I am rather embarrassed to divulge that I had mixed up the move order with my game against Perez Ponsa, which saw 11...c5 at once. Mind you, this also happened frequently in the good old days, so it did not necessarily have anything to do with people saying that the brain starts shrinking around 50... The text may transpose to the current game with equal tempi if White plays 12.♗b2.

11...c5 12.♗c1 (12.dxc6?! ♕xa5 13.♗b2 ♘xc6 gives Black a very pleasant game since 14.♕xd6?? ♖d8 traps the queen) 12...♖xa5 13.a4 ♖f8 14.♗d2 ♖a6 15.♕c2 ♘e8 16.♖fb1 h6 was Hjartarson-Perez Ponsa, and now 17.♖b5!? f5 18.a5 is perhaps slightly better for White.

12.♗b4 ♖a8



13.a4

Again 13.c5 dxc5 14.♗xc5 c6 leads to equality after either:

A) 15.d6 ♕a5 16.♖c1 ♕xc5 17.♘b5 ♕b4 18.♘c7 ♖d8 19.♘xa8 ♕xd6;

B) or 15.dxc6 ♕a5! 16.♗c4 ♕xc5 17.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 18.♘g5+ ♔f8 19.cxb7 ♖b8 (19...♗xb7 20.♘e6+) 20.♕b3 in Lalic-Perez Ponsa, Cappelle-la-Grande 2015. It's a perpetual after the forced 20...♘ed5 21.♘xd5 ♖xb7 22.♕f3 ♗g4 23.♘xh7+ ♔f7 24.♘g5+ ♔f8 25.♘h7+.

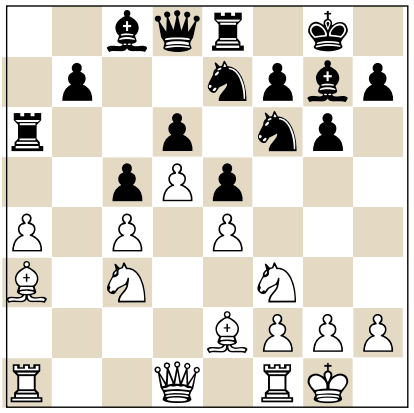
13...c5

Cautious souls have thrown in a third tempo to support d6 with 13...♗f8, but this was not to my taste.

14.♗a3

Eljanov took my word for it and played his move rather quickly. However, it was a perfectly viable option to grab the pawn on d6, leaving Black with the challenging task to prove that he has sufficient long-term compensation: 14.dxc6!? ♘xc6 15.♗xd6 ♘d4 (15...♗g4!?) 16.c5 ♕a5 was seen in a correspondence game that was drawn. To recap, Black could have avoided this line if he had used the correct move order on move 11.

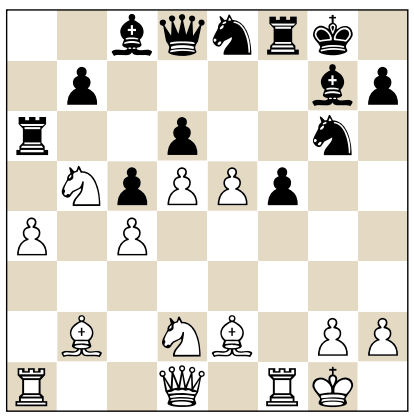
14...♖a6



15.♘d2?! Withdrawing the knight is possibly premature, since White deprives himself of the typical Bayonet ♘g5-e6 sally after Black's standard ...f7-f5 advance. Oftentimes, Black commits to ...h6 to prevent it, which is undesirable once the kingside opens up and obviously costs a tempo as well. White still had plenty of other useful moves like ♖b1, ♗c1, ♕c2, etc., with a slightly better position. Now Black equalizes pretty easily.

15...♖f8 16.♗b2 ♘e8 17.♘b5 f5 18.exf5 gxf5 18...♘xf5!? 19.♘e4 ♘d4 20.♗xd4 exd4 21.♗g4 ♗f5, with equal chances, was also possible.

19.f4 ♘g6 20.fxe5



20...♘xe5?! I somehow felt that it was in the spirit of the position to keep the King's Indian bishop alive, which is probably not correct.

Easier equality is obtained with either 20...♗xe5 21.♗xe5 ♘xe5 or, even better, 20...♕e7!? 21.♔h1 ♗xe5 22.♗xe5 dxe5!?, mobilizing the rook along the 6th rank, where it can later take part in the offensive on the kingside.

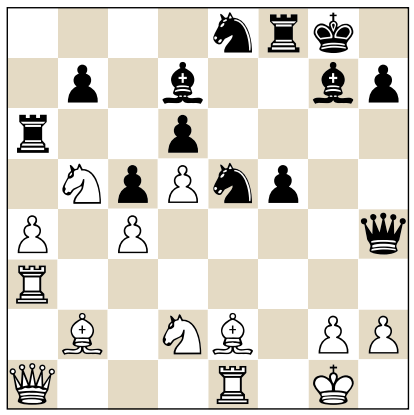
21.♖a3 ♗d7 22.♕a1?!

A rather dubious deployment of the queen far from home, since Black is

'My humble opinion is that the element of surprise in the opening is vastly underestimated nowadays, even amongst the world elite'

pretty solid on the back end of the long diagonal. 22.♕c2 was more natural.

22...♕e7 23.♖e1 ♕h4!

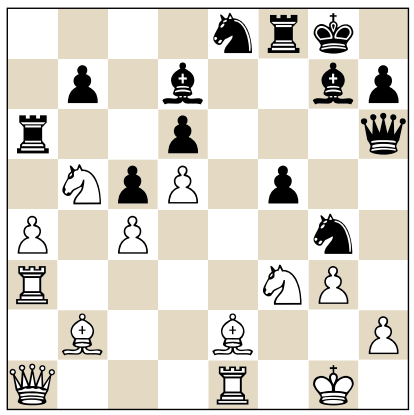


24.g3?! White should have gone back, 24.♖f1, and it seems that Black has nothing better than 24...♕e7, with a possible repetition of moves. The text causes a serious weakening on the kingside, giving Black increased prospects of forcing the opening of the f-file with ...f4.

24...♕h6! Eljanov had probably missed this, since he took considerable time for the next few moves.

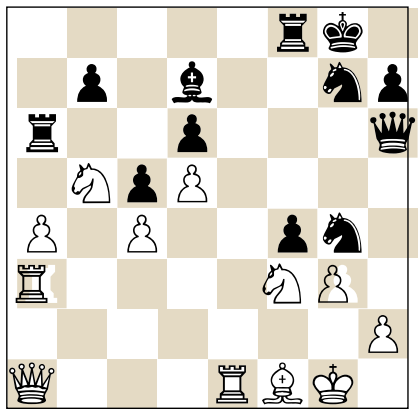
25.♘f3 ♘g4

Interesting was 25...f4 26.♘xe5 dxe5 27.♗xe5 ♖g6, with ample compensation and an easy game.



26.♗xg7?! Better was 26.♗c1! ♕h5 27.♕a2, and things are still unclear. Now White has no way of preventing the opening of the f-file.

26...♘xg7 27.♗f1 f4



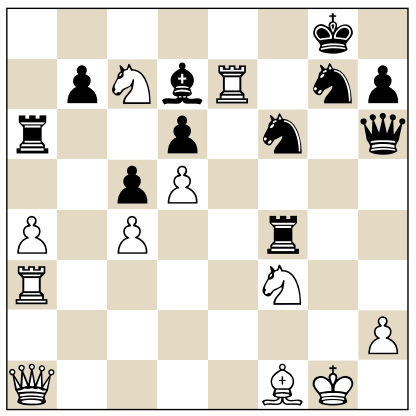
28.gxf4? 28.♕c1 ♖aa8, and Black has a considerable advantage but White can still defend.

28...♖xf4 29.♖e7?

A desperate sally in time-trouble that just loses valuable time, but it is hard to find meaningful improvements, e.g. 29.♕a2 ♘f6 30.♗g2 ♘gh5, with a clear advantage for Black.

29...♘f6 Even stronger was 29...♘f5! 30.♖xd7 ♖xf3, winning.

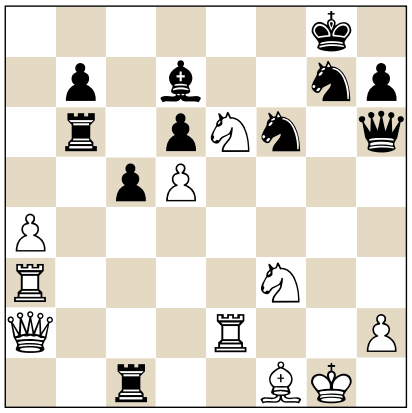
30.♘c7 30.♘d2 ♘f5 31.♖e2 ♖g4+ 32.♗g2 ♘h5 gives Black a massive attack. Now the second black rook joins the party with decisive force.



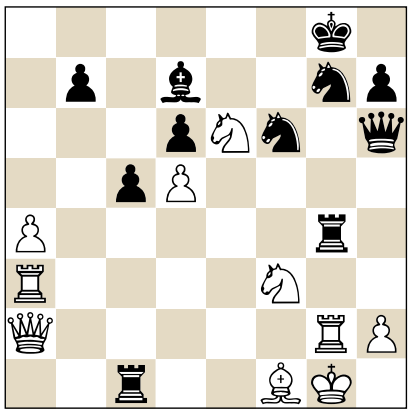
30...♖b6! 31.♖e2 ♖xc4 32.♘e6 ♖c1 33.♕a2

Playing in the impressive Harpa concert and conference centre is for the most part fantastic. However, it has like six different concert halls, one of which is close to the playing area. Around this point, a concert was about to start there, with the audience flocking in with the usual noise and

commotion. Thankfully, I still had around 20 minutes left in this completely winning position. It took 15 minutes to organize my thoughts, when I was finally able to produce some logical moves to bring home the bacon against this strong player. I am sure that my distinguished opponent, who was in desperate time-trouble, was no less disturbed.



33...♖b4 34.♖g2 ♖g4



35.♖b3? An oversight, but White is also lost after 35.♘xg7 ♕xg7 36.♕b2 ♖xg2+ 37.♕xg2 ♘xd5.

35...♘xe6 36.dxe6 ♗xe6

As he is about to lose more material, White resigned.

■ ■ ■

Fischer Random

We continue with another intermezzo. On the rest day, an exciting Fischer Random tournament was held, which was won by Aleksandr Lenderman. As Rapport finished second, he was crowned the 'First Official European Fischer Random Champion' (Whew! That was too long and tiring to write☺), while Alina l'Ami became the 'First Official Women European Fischer Random Champion' (I am totally exhausted☺). I think such chess suits people like Rapport and myself... though at the end of the day, I refuse to believe that classical chess will end. This can be played for a refreshing change, but nothing more!

Coming back to the Reykjavik Open, I felt the only thing that might stop me were my games with black! I was rocking with White, whereas I had drawn the two games with black against Indians (maybe the latter was the real issue and I was getting worried for no reason). In Round 5, I finally managed to break the jinx with a nice win against Haria Ravi, after which I knew that I was very close to my goal! Though, to be honest, in Round 5 there was only one game that was on everyone's mind. Enter Rapport!

I don't think his opponent, Vladimir Hamitevici, had any idea who he was messing with (or he know only too well ☺) when he went 1.a3, which was immediately met, without thinking, by the stunning 1...h6.

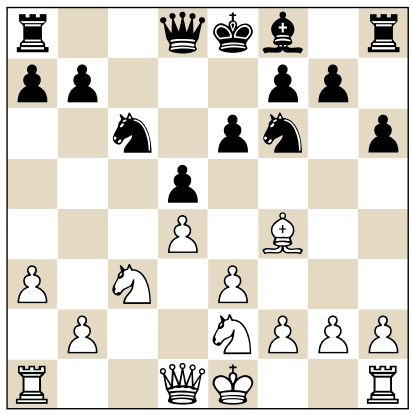
Vladimir Hamitevici
Richard Rapport
Reykjavik 2018 (5)
Global Opening

1.a3 h6 I mean, how do you even come up with such a move? Only Rapport knows...

2.c4 2.b4 g5 was probably his intention?! And then maybe 3.♗b2 ♘f6.

2...c6 And now he plays normally ☺. How does he do it?

3.d4 d5 4.cxd5 cxd5 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.♗f4 ♘c6 7.e3 ♗g4 8.♗e2 ♗xe2 9.♘gxe2 e6



Around here Rapport happily told Erwin l'Ami, 'I have a good version of the Slav Exchange; my h6 is more

BEREND VONK

useful than a3.' Erwin was like, 'Well if you say so!'

10.h3 ♗e7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♘a4 ♖c8 And Rapport convincingly won the game! (0-1, 44)

But back to myself. At many junctures during the event I would think: 'Will I really be able to make it to the team? Maybe I should just accept the reality and get ready for the worst...' But at the same time I said to myself: 'If I am going down, I won't go down without a fight!'

The Aeroflot Open last year was one of the worst tournaments I had ever played, and in Round 6, I was happy to be paired against one of the players I had played there. I thought to myself: 'Time for some payback', and I was determined to use every ounce of strength I had... And so I put on my Superman T-shirt, which I use when I need to show that I mean business ☺.

ALINA L'AMI

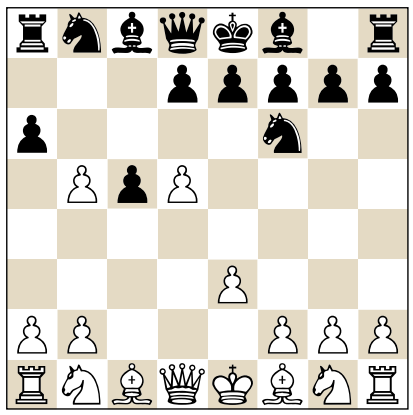
Richard Rapport was one of the top favourites and, as always, true to his original self. 'I mean, how do you even come up with such a move? Only Rapport knows…'

Adhiban Baskaran
Alejandro Ramirez
Reykjavik 2018 (6)
Benko Gambit

1.d4

I hope Fischer will forgive me for opening with 1.d4, as he mainly preferred the king's pawn for the first move!

1...♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.e3

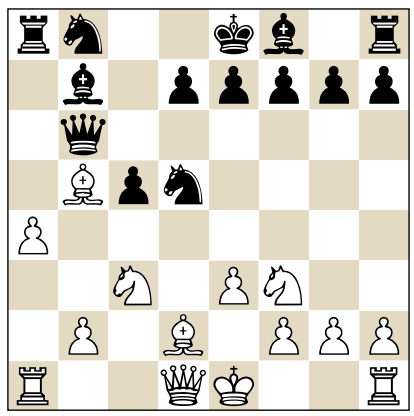


In the live commentary, Simon Williams joked that he found the Benko Gambit always a pain, but now he knows what to play against it! Opponents of Simon, you have been warned!

5...axb5

Ramirez previously had a stunning win against Tomashevsky at the 2013 World Cup in Tromsø after 5...g6 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.e4 0-0 8.a4, which leads to very interesting territory.

6.♗xb5 ♕a5+ 7.♘c3 ♗b7 8.♗d2 ♕b6 9.♘f3 ♘xd5 10.a4



10...♕g6!?

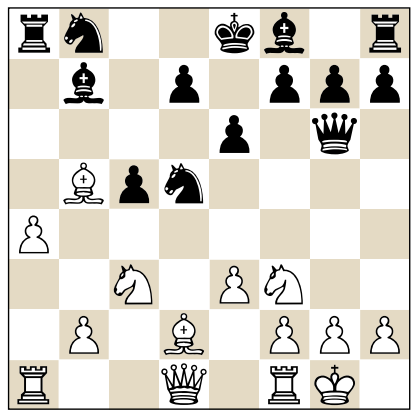
10...e6 11.0-0 ♗e7 is how the main line continues, and the results aren't so bad for Black.

If Black goes for the bishop with 10...♘c7, then 11.0-0 ♘xb5 12.axb5 ♖xa1 13.♕xa1, with a clear advantage for White (one plan is ♘e5-c4).

11.0-0

11.♘xd5 ♗xd5 12.♗c3 e6 felt like only helping Black.

11...e6



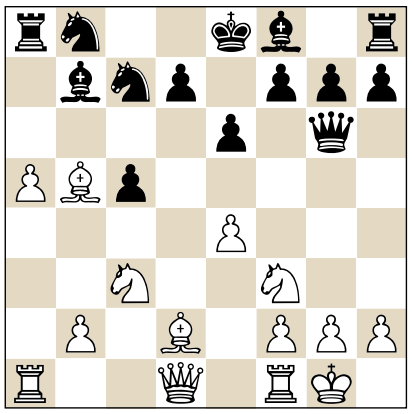
12.a5!

Passed pawns must be pushed!

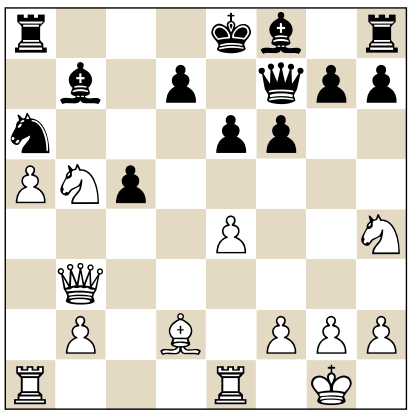
Here, after 12.♘e5, 12...♕xg2+! was Ramirez's amazing point: 13.♔xg2 ♘xc3+ 14.♕f3 ♗xf3+ 15.♔xf3. This would possibly give White some advantage, but there was no need to go for this line.

12...♘c7 After 12...♗e7 13.a6! ♗xa6 14.♘e5 ♕f6 (in case of 14...♕f5 15.♘xd7! ♘xd7 16.♖xa6 ♖xa6 17.♗xa6, Black will not be in time to get his king to safety due to the threat of e4) 15.f4! Black is in trouble.

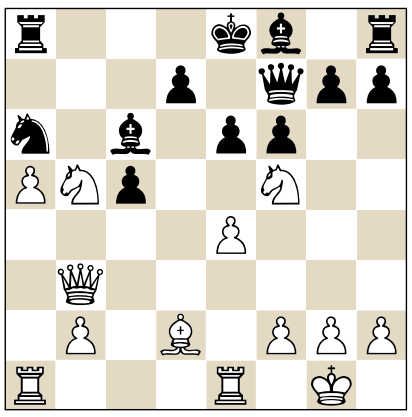
13.e4! Never back down!



13...♘xb5 After 13...♗xe4 14.♘h4 ♕f6 15.♘xe4 ♕xh4 16.♖e1 White has a killer development advantage and a strong initiative for the pawn.
14.♘xb5 ♘a6 15.♖e1!
Simple and strong.
15...f6 The only way to prevent ♘e5.
16.♘h4! ♕f7 17.♕b3!
A double blow!! Threatening both 18.♘c7+ and 18.♘f5.

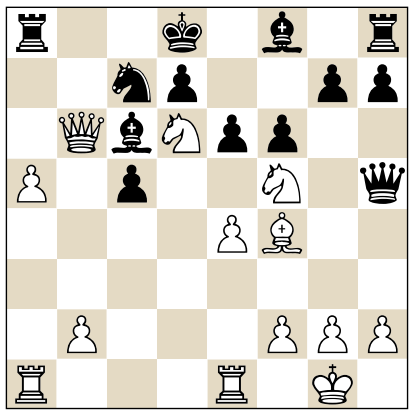


17...♗c6
17...c4 18.♘c7+ ♘xc7 19.♕xb7 ♗d6 20.♗b4 also looks depressing, since Black will be unable to castle.
18.♘f5!

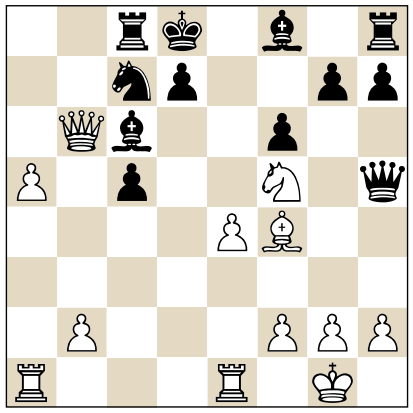


As my trainer noted, 'You were attacking on all fronts!'

18...♕h5
After 18...♗xb5 19.♕xb5 exf5 (both of us under-estimated the cold-blooded 19...♗e7!, after which I would probably have gone for 20.♘e3 ♖a7 21.♕b6 ♖a8 22.♕b7 0-0 23.♕xd7, with a healthy extra pawn) 20.♕b7! Black will be too late.
And 18...exf5 19.exf5+ loses due to the threat of 20.♘d6+.
19.♘bd6+ ♔d8 20.♕b6+ ♘c7 21.♗f4!

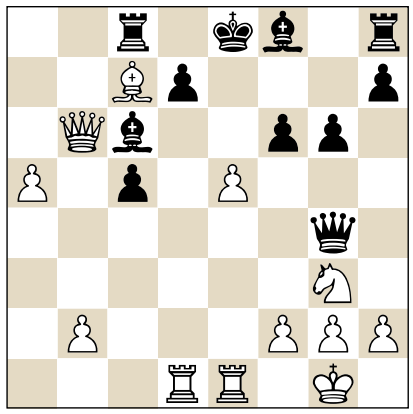


21...exf5 22.♘xf5!?
After 22.exf5 ♗xd6 23.♗xd6 ♖c8 is a very surprising rejoinder, as there is no killer move, but... 24.♕xc5! wins. I felt the game continuation to be much simpler.
22...♖c8

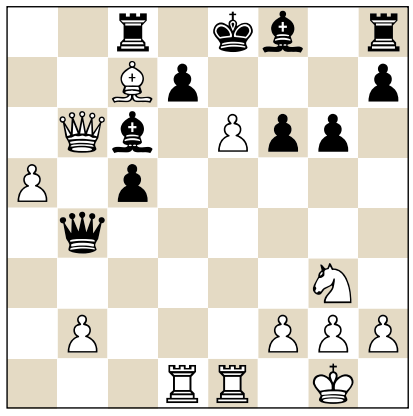


23.♖ad1!
Bring all your toys to the party!
23.♗xc7+ ♖xc7 24.a6 was my first intention, but after 24...♕e8 25.a7 ♗a8 things weren't so clear.
23...♔e8
23...♗a4 24.b3 is also hopeless.
24.♗xc7 g6 25.♘g3
Preparing the deadly e5. There was no need to allow 25.♘d6+ ♗xd6 26.♖xd6 ♔f7.

25...♕g4 26.e5



26...♕b4
After 26...fxe5, 27.♗xe5 ♖g8 28.♕b3! d5 (28...c4 runs into 29.♗f4+, cutting off the defence of c4) 29.♗f4+ ♔f7 30.♖xd5! ♗xd5 31.♕xd5+ ♔g7 32.♗e5+ ♔h6 33.♕xg8 was one of the lines I saw during the game.
27.e6



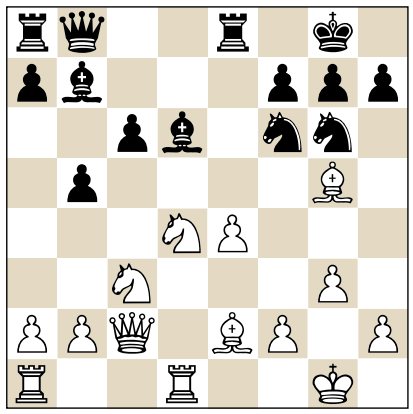
Once the c6-bishop loses its protection, Black's entire position collapses... And that, my friends, is how you get your revenge in style!!
After 27...♕xb6, 28.exd7++ is a pretty finish. Black resigned.

Great potential

Another guy who made a significant impact on this year's edition was my young countryman Nihal Sarin (13). He played some great games, and at some point everyone's only concern was not to play him! (They were fine facing me or Rapport ☹)

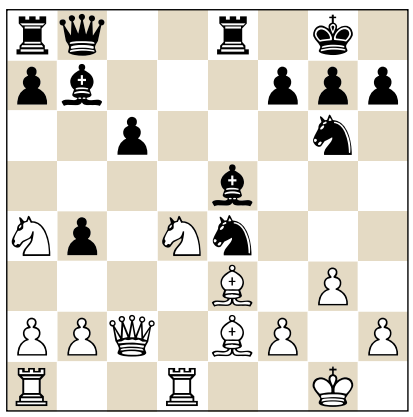
A nice positional understanding, razor-sharp calculation skills and good endgame knowledge are some of Nihal's trademarks. My friends believe that he has the potential to be great some day!

Mustafa Yilmaz
Nihal Sarin
Reykjavik 2018 (7)

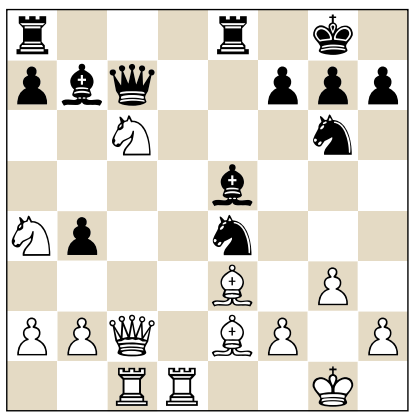


position after 16.♗g5

16...♗e5 17.♗e3 An inaccuracy, which was all Nihal needed to turn the game around! After 17.♘f5 White can hope for a slight edge.
17...b4! 18.♘a4 ♘xe4



19.♘xc6
Better was 19.♕xe4 c5 20.♘c6 ♕c7 21.♗f3 ♗d4 22.♘e7+ ♖xe7 23.♕xb7 ♕xb7 24.♗xb7 ♖xb7 25.♘xc5 ♗xc5 26.♗xc5 f6, with a probable draw.
19...♕c7 20.♖ac1

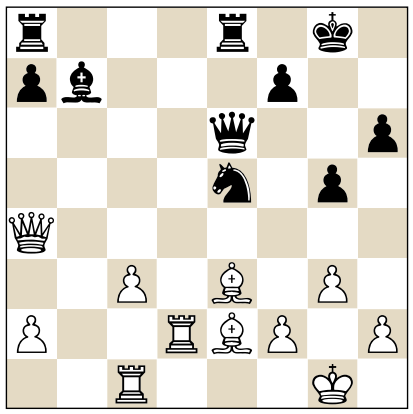


20...♘c3! Nihal correctly judged that the position arising after the mess would be more than fine for him.

LENNART OOTES

'A nice positional understanding, razor-sharp calculation skills and good endgame knowledge' are some of 13-year-old Nihal Sarin's trademarks.

21.♘xc3 bxc3 22.♘xe5 ♕xe5 23.bxc3 ♕e6!
I assume Yilmaz had missed this strong move.
24.♕a4 ♘e5 25.♕f4 h6! Kicking the queen out, after which White's position is close enough to losing.
26.♖d2 g5 27.♕a4



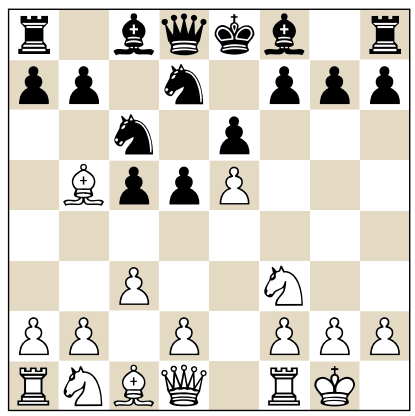
27...♕h3 27...♕f5!, with the deadly threat of ...♘f3+, would have crowned Black's attack. **28.f3 ♘xf3+ 29.♗xf3 ♗xf3** Although Black still has a clear advantage, the game ended in a draw after 41 moves.

Flowers on Fischer's grave

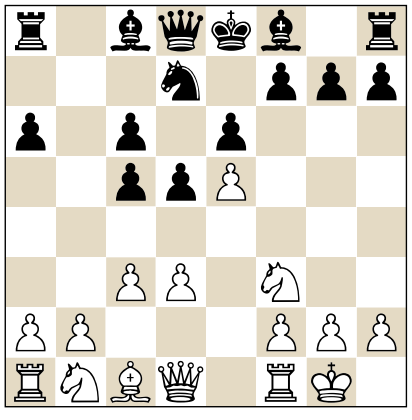
Before the event I was telling my friends: 'I hope the spirit of Fischer will be with me!' At the same time I knew it wasn't going to be easy to play like Fischer! But you won't know unless you try ☺! I skipped the excursion to Fischer's grave to prepare for my Round 7 game and told my friend Niranjan (who did go on the trip) to put some flowers on the grave on my behalf. Needless to say, it worked wonders!

This round turned out to be the warm-up for the final showdown for the highest honour. The following game by Rapport, played on Board 1, was easily one of my favourite games of the event!

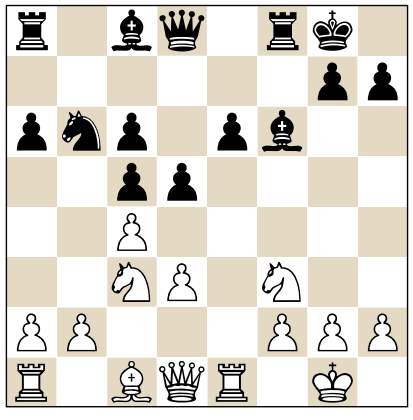
Richard Rapport
Aleksandr Lenderman
Reykjavik 2018 (7)
Sicilian Defence
1.♘f3 c5 2.e4 e6 3.c3 ♘f6 4.♗d3 ♘c6 5.0-0 d5 6.e5 ♘d7 7.♗b5



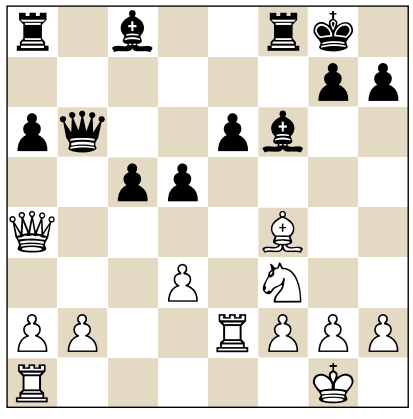
7...a6
7...♗e7 was played just one day before in the same event... Could this be Rapport's source of inspiration? In that game between Daniel Fernandez and Alina l'Ami, 8.d4 was played, but it looks hasty. Rapport's treatment of the position is much sexier ☺.
8.♗xc6 bxc6 9.d3!



Making sure the doubled c-pawns remain a permanent headache for Black.
9...♗e7 10.♖e1 0-0
10...g5!? looks like a much better way to play the position.
11.c4!
Now the c8-bishop has been added to the list of Black's problems.
11...f6 The comp doesn't get it at all and assesses the position after 11...a5 as 0.00.
12.exf6 ♗xf6 13.♘c3 ♘b6



14.♘a4!
Removing the last defender that could actually put up a fight for the important e5-square.
14...♘xa4 15.♕xa4 ♕d6
16.cxd5! Continuing the fight for the e5-square... The entire game revolves around it!
16...cxd5 The comp prefers the ugly 16...♕xd5!?, and I won't even bother to mention its assessment, because I feel it would ruin the greatness of this game.
17.♗f4 ♕b6 18.♖e2



18...♗e7
After 18...♗xb2 19.♖b1, 19...♕b5! is a nice idea, but after 20.♕xb5 axb5

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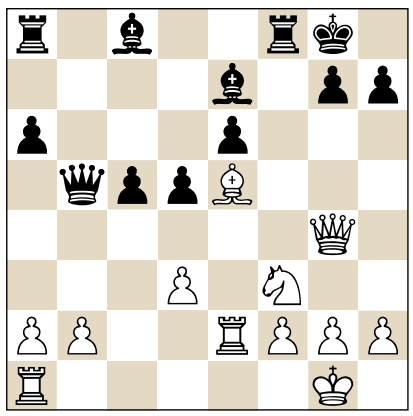
21.♗d6 ♖d8 22.♗xc5 White has the better position.

19.♗e5 ♕b5

Better was 19...d4!, cutting off the queen, and Black is doing fine.

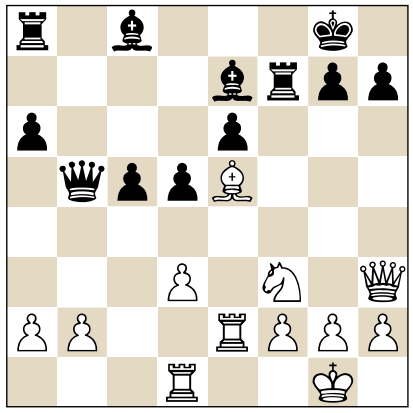
20.♕g4



After this, facing Rapport from the black side becomes a *coshmar*!

20...♖f7 21.♖d1 Now that all pieces have been activated, it is a pleasure to watch Rapport go in for the kill.

21...♗f8 22.♕h3 ♗e7

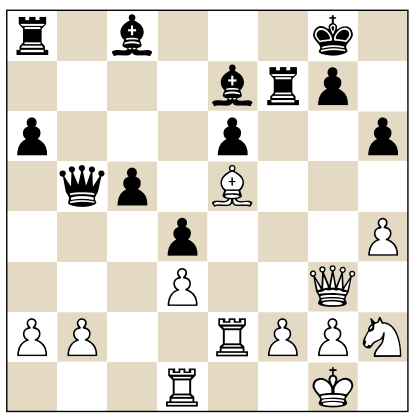


23.♕g3 An epic manoeuvre, and it took a while to understand what White wanted!

23...d4 Too late...

23...♗f8 24.♗d6!, and White will rule the dark squares!

24.h4 h6 25.♘h2!



‘I already felt that Fischer’s spirit was guiding me and it was time for Superman to return!!’

25...h5

Or 25...♗d7 26.♕g6, followed by ♘g4, with a crushing attack. And in case of 25...♗b7 26.♘g4 ♔h7 there is 27.♗xg7! ♖xg7 28.♖xe6, with a strong attack.

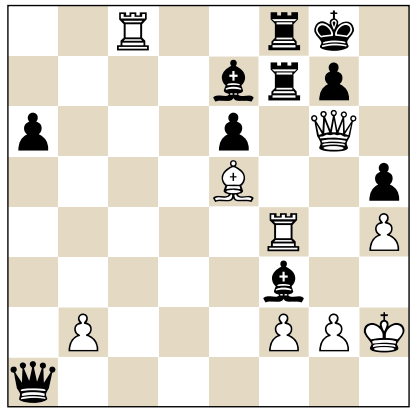
26.♕g6 c4

What else?

27.dxc4 ♕xc4 28.♖c2 ♕d5 29.♘f3 ♗b7 30.♖xd4 ♕xa2 31.♖c7

It is time for the finish.

31...♕a1+ 32.♔h2 ♗xf3 33.♖f4! ♖af8 34.♖c8!



Such beautiful geometry! Black is clearly struggling to defend against the numerous threats.

34...♖f6 35.♖xf6 ♗xf6 36.♗xf6 ♖xc8 37.♕xg7 Mate.

A fantastic win.

As I was playing on Board 2, I got up to see the result and smiled to myself, because I knew there was only one way to catch him now! I managed this feat thanks to a mistake in an equal endgame by the Frenchman Maxime Lagarde (maybe he can become ML in the future to carry on the legacy of MVL).

Thanks to these victories, Rapport and I broke away from the pack, which led to an exciting title clash in Round 8. And because they had a rest day in the Candidates in Berlin, we had to compensate for the lack of excitement with our game ☺.

The moment of destiny

My plan had been very clear: Win the event and win it alone! But as I was getting closer to my goal, those negative feelings returned... I told myself firmly: ‘This is my destiny... and I won’t let anything get in the way of my destiny!’ I already felt that Fischer’s spirit was guiding me and it was time for Superman to return!!

Adhiban Baskaran
Richard Rapport
Reykjavik 2018 (8)
Slav Defence, Geller-Tolush Gambit

Here we go. ‘The clash of the Titans!’

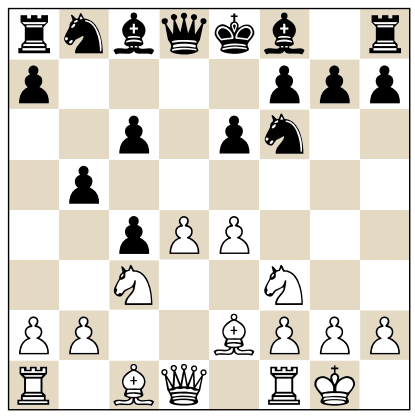
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6

In my preparation I had mainly been expecting 2...♘c6 ☺.

3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.e4!?

Going all in! The Geller-Tolush Gambit!

5...b5 6.♗e2 e6 7.0-0



7...♗e7

Later, in the European Championship, Black played 7...♗b7, which is more critical, but White was up to the job: 8.b3!? ♗b4 9.e5 ♗xc3 10.exf6 gxf6 11.♖b1 c5 12.bxc4 cxd4 13.♖xb5 ♗c6 14.♖c5 ♗e4 15.♗d3 ♗xd3 16.♕xd3 ♘a6 17.♖b5 ♕d6 18.♘h4 ♕c6 19.♗a3 ♖c8 20.♕g3 ♕xc4 21.♕d6 ♗b4 22.♗xb4, with a crushing win for White in Dubov-Postny, Batumi 2018.

ALINA L'AMI

Superman in civilian clothes. Adhiban Baskaran was happy to learn that the wonderful Harpa Concert Hall will be the venue for the Reykjavik Open for at least the next three years.

8.a4! And now he has to give back the pawn, which was the drawback of ...♗e7.

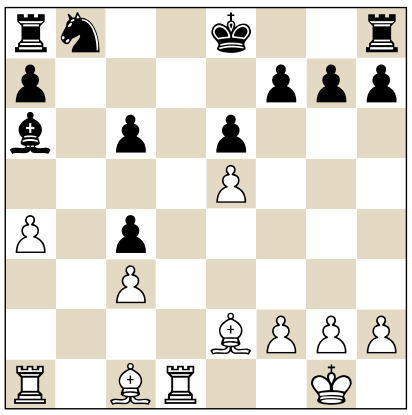
8...b4 9.e5 bxc3 10.exf6 ♗xf6

10...cxb2 11.fxg7 bxa1♕ 12.gxh8♕+ reminded me of the famous Alekhine game with four queens on the board!

11.bxc3 ♗a6 12.♘e5! Preventing ...♘d7. 12.♗a3 ♘d7 doesn't look so bad for Black.

12...♗xe5 12...0-0 13.♗f3 is clearly better for White.

13.dxe5 ♕xd1 14.♖xd1

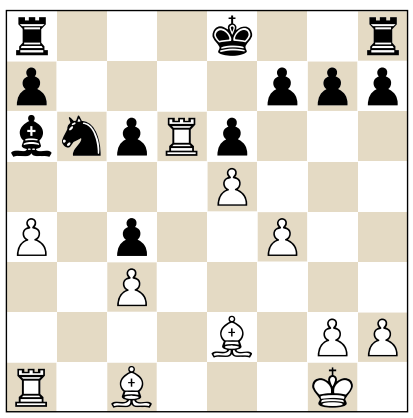


I felt this should be really good for me. Rapport may have underestimated the dangers of his position; the extra pawn is sadly not felt here.

14...♘d7 15.f4 ♘b6

After 15...♘c5 16.♖d6 ♘b3 (16...♘e4 17.♖xc6 ♘xc3 18.♗f1! ♗b7 19.♖xc4, with a clear White advantage) 17.♖b1 White controls the battle, and the outpost on b3 is more or less useless.

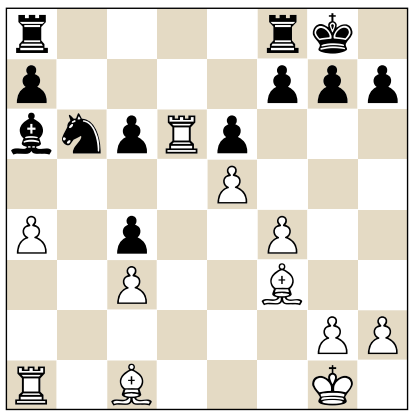
16.♖d6



16...0-0

Or 16...♘d5 17.♗f3! 0-0 (17...♖c8 18.♗xd5 exd5 19.♗a3 looked very nice for White) 18.♖xc6 ♗b7 19.♖xc4 ♖fc8 20.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 21.♗d2, with a healthy extra pawn.

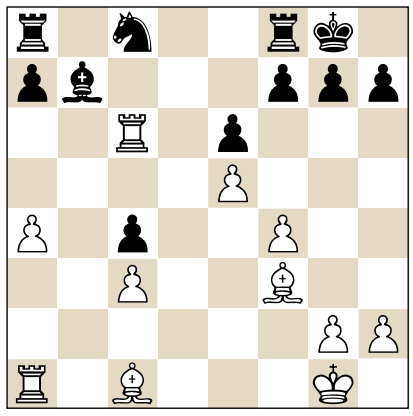
17.♗f3



17...♘c8?

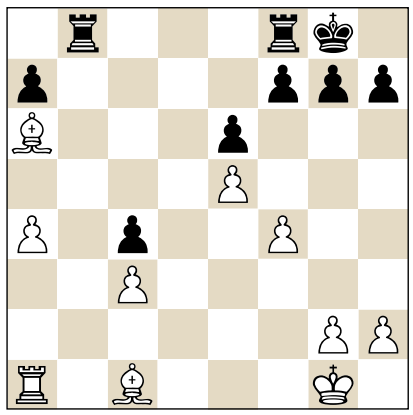
Panic! Although he remains worse, better for Black was 17...♘d5 18.♖xc6 ♗b7 19.♖xc4, transposing to the note to 16...♘d5.

18.♖xc6 ♗b7



19.♖xc8! A simple shot that determines Black's fate.

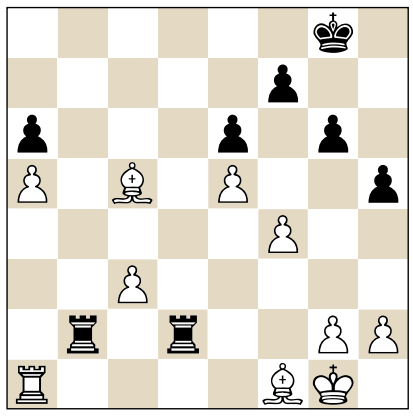
19...♖axc8 20.♗xb7 ♖b8 21.♗a6



21...♖b3

21...♖b6 is met by 22.♗b5!, followed by ♗e3, winning.

22.♗a3 ♖d8 23.♗b4 ♖d2 24.♗xc4 ♖bb2 25.♗f1 h5 26.a5 a6 27.♗c5 g6



And here, while I was thinking about how to win, Rapport lost patience and resigned.

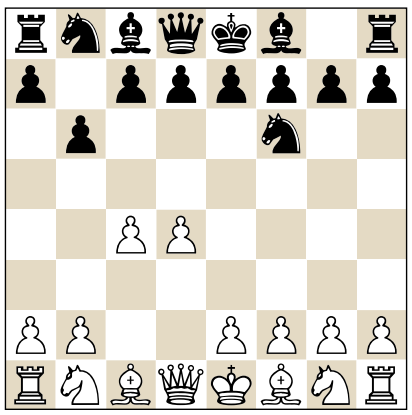
During this round, there was another game besides my own that intrigued me, because it looked as if White was cruising through for a miniature! Let's have a look at it through the eyes of its creator!

NOTES BY
Konstantin Landa

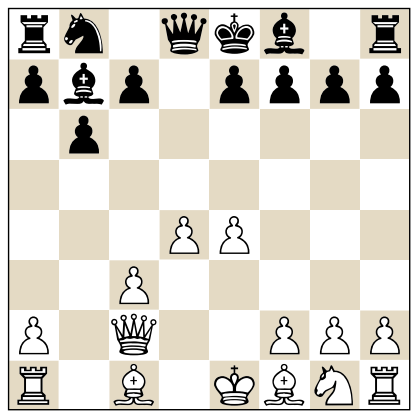
Konstantin Landa
Vladimir Hamitevici
Reykjavik 2018 (8)
Queen's Indian Accelerated

For me this was a second successive invitation to Reykjavik. I was born and grew up in Siberia, so that I can easily endure a cold wind, but how Indian players cope with such weather and also contrive to win remains a mystery to me!
The Icelandic capital increasingly resembles an enormous tourist city, and the tournament organizers had some problems in accommodating the players – all hotels are booked up six months in advance! But how can you not to go Iceland for a holiday – the people here are hospitable and know how to enjoy themselves to the full!

All this is something of a digression from the game I played in Round 8 against the Moldova grandmaster Vladimir Hamitevici.
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 b6!?

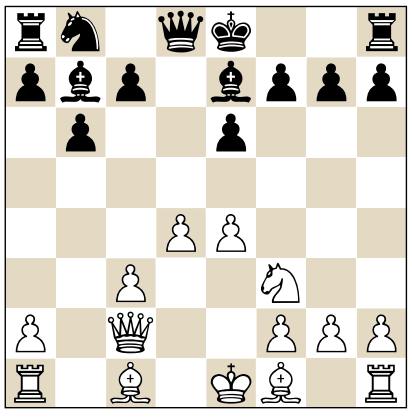


A move which rules out many popular openings on the spot! At one time, I was also interested in it, but after looking at the positions resulting from the opening, I decided that White can immediately cause problems.
3.♘c3
Catalan fanatics may encounter the following set-up by Black: 3.g3 ♗b7 4.♘f3 g6!? (after the standard 4...e6 White's advantage is equally imperceptible) 5.♗g2 ♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘c3 ♘e4!, and in my view Black has successfully solved all his problems.
3...♗b7 4.♕c2
The most principled move. White threatens to seize complete control of the centre with e2-e4.
4...d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3

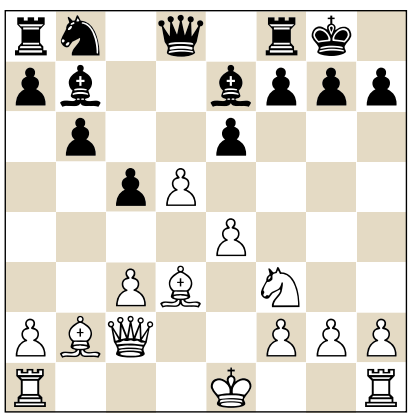


7...e6 Now the resulting positions very much resemble the Petrosian Variation in the Queen's Indian Defence, the only difference being that White has economized on the move a2-a3. If I remember correctly, it was somewhere around here that my enthusiasm for studying 2...b6 as Black came to a halt. However, there may be other opinions.
The Venezuelan Iturrizaga, an adherent of the 2...b6!? variation, obtains more lively positions. He prefers 7...e5, but even here, in my view, it is only Black who has problems to solve after 8.♘f3 exd4 9.♗c4 ♘c6 10.0-0 d3 11.♗xd3 ♕e7 12.♗f4.

8.♘f3 ♗e7
My opponent had already played this several times, as I had seen in my database.



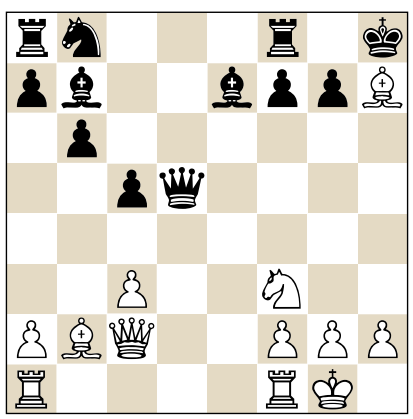
9.♗b2!?
A novelty. To be honest, I don't understand why this logical move remained unnoticed by the chess public.
After studying attempts by White to gain an advantage after 9.♗b5+ c6 10.♗d3 c5 11.♗b5+ (if now 11.0-0, Black has the preparatory exchange 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 0-0 13.♗b2 ♘c6!, which gives him a satisfactory game in the style of the Lasker Defence) 11...♗c6 12.a4 you have to ask yourself what if, instead of throwing the bishop around, you make the developing move ♗b2.
9...0-0
Now 9...c5 gives White an important tempo – the bishop leaps to b5 in one move: 10.♗b5+ ♗c6 11.♗d3.
I suspect that future revivers of the variation for Black will start playing 9...♘d7!?, but then the knight will never go to c6, and this would fully satisfy me.
10.♗d3 c5 11.d5!



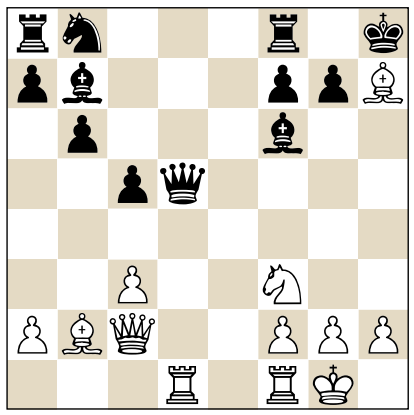
LENNART OOTES

Konstantin Landa won a flashy miniature against Vladimir Hamitevici by using a plan for White that he had found when he was considering to play Black's unusual opening himself.

This move is the whole point – the pawn advances to d5 and capturing it proves to be dangerous.
11...exd5 The main line of the analysis was the variation with the pawn sacrifice 11...b5 12.dxe6 (12.c4 bxc4 13.♗xc4 exd5 14.exd5 ♘d7 15.0-0 ♘b6 16.♖fd1 ♘xc4 17.♕xc4 ♗d6 18.♖ab1 is sound, but does not yield any advantage) 12...c4 13.exf7+ ♖xf7 14.♗e2. I was ready to play this position, in which White has an extra pawn, for which Black has compensation.
12.exd5 ♕xd5 Black cannot be satisfied with variations like 12...h6 13.c4 b5 14.cxb5 ♗xd5 (14...♕xd5 15.0-0-0 ♕xa2 loses to 16.♗h7+ ♔h8 17.♗xg7+) 15.0-0-0, with a decisive attack.
13.♗xh7+ ♔h8 14.0-0



14...♗f6?
Played after only a short think. My opponent's intuition let him down in this game.
Of what I had prepared at home I remembered only 14...f5 15.♖fe1 ♕f7 16.♕xf5 ♕xf5 17.♗xf5 ♗xf3 (Black does not have time to capture the piece in a different order: 17...♖xf5 18.♖xe7 ♗xf3 19.♖e8+, with a fatal pin along the 8th rank) 18.♗d3! ♗f6 19.gxf3.
However, the lesser evil was 14...♕d6 15.♖ad1 ♕h6 16.♗e4 ♗xe4 17.♕xe4 ♘c6 18.♖d7 ♕e6, with only a small advantage for White.
15.♖ad1!



15...♕xa2?

Vladimir decided to follow the principled path right to the end.

His last, and far from obvious, chance was 15...♕h5! 16.♗e4 ♗xe4 (the black queen is in trouble after 16...♘c6 17.♖d5! ♕h6 18.♗c1) 17.♕xe4 ♘a6 18.♕b7 ♘b4 19.cxb4 ♗xb2 20.♖d5 ♕g4 21.bxc5, although White is obviously clearly better.

I should mention that 15...♕c6 16.♕f5 g6 17.♕h3 ♔g7 does not work either on account of the interposition of the bishop 18.♗c1!

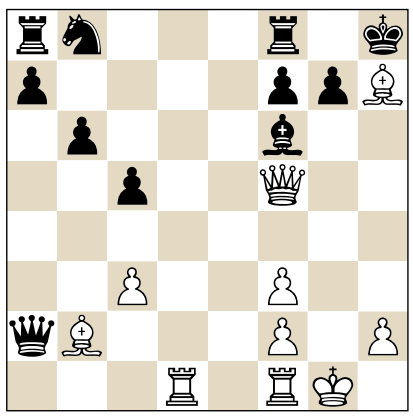
16.♕f5!

Now the white pieces will weave a mating net within a few moves.

16...♗xf3

16...♕xb2 hits on 17.♕h3.

17.gxf3



17...♕xb2

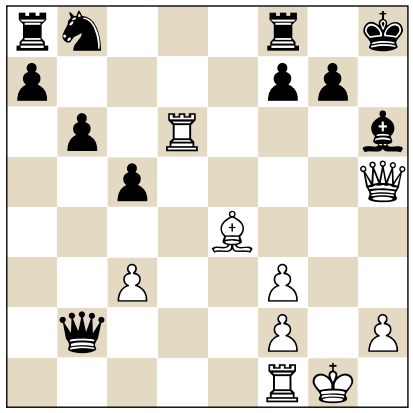
Other moves would not have saved Black either. For instance, 17...♕c4 18.♕h5 ♕h4 19.♖d5 ♕xh5 20.♖xh5 ♘d7 21.♗f5+ or 17...g6 18.♕xf6+ ♔xh7 19.c4.

But there is one that, in my view, is pretty: 17...♗g5 18.♕h3 ♗h6 19.♗e4 f5 20.♖d6! (in the computer's opinion, two or three other moves also win) 20...fxe4 21.♖xh6+ gxh6 22.♕xh6+ ♔g8 23.♕g6+ ♔h8 24.♔h1! ♘d7 25.♖g1 ♖f7 26.c4+ ♕xb2 27.♕xf7 ♕e5 28.♕xd7, and Black cannot avoid mate. I managed to calculate as far as this position, while Black was considering whether to capture the bishop.

18.♕h5 ♗g5 19.♗e4+ ♗h6

Now my opponent had been counting only on 20.♕xf7 ♘d7 21.♕xd7 ♖ae8, with a bad, but still playable position.

20.♖d6



Black resigned.

There could have followed 20...f6 21.♖xf6 ♖g8 22.♔h1! with unavoidable mate.

■ ■ ■

Back to my story. After my cool win against Rapport, I was leading by half point going into the last round. Yilmaz was the only player trailing me, so a draw would be sufficient to win the event outright. The day before the final round, I was asked in the live commentary if I was going to put on my Superman T-shirt again. I laughed it off and said: "No, it has served its purpose. I have worn it thrice and one more time would just be asking for Yilmaz to make an official complaint!' Though I will let you in on a secret on what really went on in my mind at that point: 'It's the man that makes the shirt!'

I played a decent game, allowed some minor chances that luckily my opponent didn't capitalize on and I drew without too many problems.

Immediately after the game, the organizer of the event, Gunnar Bjornsson, asked me to give a speech at the closing ceremony. To which I replied: 'Of course! I have been dreaming about this moment ever since I came to Iceland!'

In my speech I thanked Tania Sachdev, who bullied me into playing this event, and Erwin l'Ami, who provoked me by asking how many events I had won so far. And I ended with this note: 'I have always been a big fan of Bobby Fischer and I am happy to win this tournament dedicated to him to honour his memory!' ■

Reykjavik 2018

1	**Adhiban Baskaran**	IND	2650	**7½**
2	**Maxime Lagarde**	FRA	2587	**7**
3	**Mustafa Yilmaz**	TUR	2619	**7**
4	**Eugene Perelshteyn**	USA	2513	**6½**
5	**Erwin l'Ami**	NED	2634	**6½**
6	**Pavel Eljanov**	UKR	2713	**6½**
7	**Richard Rapport**	HUN	2715	**6½**
8	**Suri Vaibhav**	IND	2544	**6½**
9	**Alejandro Ramirez**	USA	2568	**6½**
10	**Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa**	IND	2507	**6½**
11	**Elshan Moradiabadi**	USA	2535	**6½**
12	**Deimante Cornette**	LTU	2447	**6½**
13	**Johan-S.Christiansen**	NOR	2486	**6½**
14	**Matthieu Cornette**	FRA	2620	**6½**
15	**Emre Can**	TUR	2603	**6½**
16	**Konstantin Landa**	RUS	2613	**6½**
17	**Nodirbek Abdusattorov**	UZB	2518	**6½**
18	**Gata Kamsky**	USA	2677	**6½**
19	**Hannes Stefansson**	ISL	2533	**6½**
20	**Kidambi Sundararajan**	IND	2427	**6½**
21	**John Bartholomew**	USA	2477	**6**
22	**Vladimir Hamitevici**	MDA	2512	**6**
23	**Joshua Friedel**	USA	2562	**6**
24	**Konstantin Kavutskiy**	USA	2383	**6**
25	**Ravi Haria**	ENG	2424	**6**
26	**Johann Hjartarson**	ISL	2513	**6**
27	**Shiyam Thavandiran**	CAN	2399	**6**
28	**Benjamin Gledura**	HUN	2632	**6**
29	**Bjorn Thorfinnsson**	ISL	2399	**6**
30	**Justin Sarkar**	USA	2322	**6**
31	**Nihal Sarin**	IND	2534	**6**
32	**Sabino Brunello**	ITA	2542	**6**
	David H. Cummings	CAN	2322	**6**
34	**Mark Kvetny**	GER	2408	**6**
35	**Sergey Grigoriants**	RUS	2568	**6**
36	**Tatev Abrahamyan**	USA	2369	**6**
37	**Gabriel Bick**	USA	2416	**5½**
38	**Shailesh Dravid**	IND	2246	**5½**
39	**Quentin Loiseau**	FRA	2427	**5½**
40	**Niranjan Navalgund**	IND	2275	**5½**
41	**Aloyzas Kveinys**	LTU	2511	**5½**
42	**Lenka Ptacnikova**	ISL	2200	**5½**
43	**Dirk Maxion**	GER	2187	**5½**
44	**Daniel Howard Fernandez**	ENG	2505	**5½**
45	**Alina l'Ami**	ROU	2306	**5½**
46	**Tibor Kende Antal**	HUN	2419	**5½**
47	**Nikhil Kumar**	USA	2277	**5½**
48	**Eivind Olav Risting**	NOR	2304	**5½**
49	**Evgeniya Doluhanova**	UKR	2275	**5½**
50	**Laura Unuk**	SLO	2346	**5½**
	248 players, 9 rounds			

My all-time chess hero

Amid a fine crop of new books **MATTHEW SADLER** was particularly (and rightly!) curious about a fascinating account of a period in Alexander Alekhine's life that is shrouded in mystery.

With the number of chess books being published nowadays, you would have thought that modern authors would run out of subjects to talk about. However, every month still brings surprises: historical discoveries, original middlegame themes, amazing studies. Reading all of the books is quite heavy work at times, but certainly never boring!

This issue's crop is no exception. About three months ago, I talked to Ilan Rubin – a former Kent junior, just like me, and founder of the Elk and Ruby publishing company – and he said he was working on an exciting Alekhine project. In the past few years, I've spent a lot of time analysing Alekhine's games and he's become my all-time chess hero. Even more than his games, I have been astonished by the quality of his analysis: at times, I have had to pinch myself to remember that his annotations were produced without the help of an engine. An exciting Alekhine project sounded like something I would want to read!

Alekhine's Odessa Secrets. Chess, War and Revolution by Sergei Tkachenko (Elk and Ruby) did not disappoint. The author is a chess problem and study composer and a native of Odessa. The book is largely dedicated to a part of Alekhine's life that is shrouded in mystery, starting in the summer of 1914 when war broke out and Alekhine was interned in Mannheim, where he was leading in a strong tournament, and ending in 1921 when he once again began to take part in earnest in international competitions. In fact, so little was heard of Alekhine in the West during this period that – as detailed in one of Edward Winter's excellent Chess Notes pages – rumours circulated that Alekhine had been executed in 1920.

The book focuses on three trips that Alekhine made to Odessa: the first in April 1916, the second in October 1916, and the third, which was much more extended, from mid-October 1918 to July 1919. The third period coincided with a period of anarchy in Odessa with rival forces battling for control and it was during this time that Alekhine's life was seriously in danger.

The book is a wonderful mix of chess, chess history and modern history, in which Alekhine's life, games and analysis, and the important chess figures of that period are examined in the context of the tumultuous events following the Russian Revolution. Just like Boris Gelfand – who provides the foreword to the English edition – I read the book from cover to cover in one go.

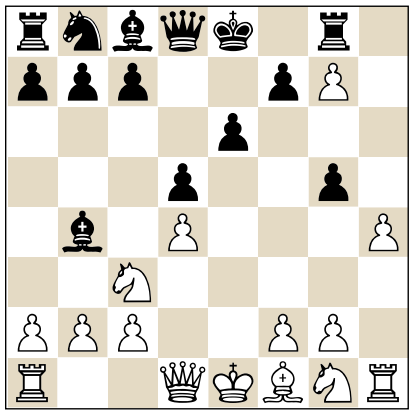
I particularly enjoyed the sketches of Odessan players of that period, some of whom were completely unknown to me, while others were just half-remembered names from tournament cross tables like Verlinsky, List, and Vilner. I was intrigued to learn that List had a strong English connection, as after first emigrating to Berlin in 1920, he then moved to England – fleeing Hitler – in 1938. Tkachenko calls him the champion of Odessa and Great Britain due to having won the British Lightning Championship in 1953 (at the age of 66!). I do wonder though where this claim comes from: the yearbook of the English Chess Federation lists the start of the event as 1954 when it was won by Leonard Barden.

The chance to see some new Alekhine games and analysis was also a major attraction of the book and the following example made me jump up in delight. It's taken from a 1956 article by Odessite Alexander Iglitsky (also profiled in the book) entitled 'Alekhine imagines'.

'Alekhine often shared his latest analysis with us. Let me show you a piece here. It is typical of just how carefully and deeply Alekhine checked all commentary appearing in the press, in particular that written by the then World Champion Lasker and by Capablanca.

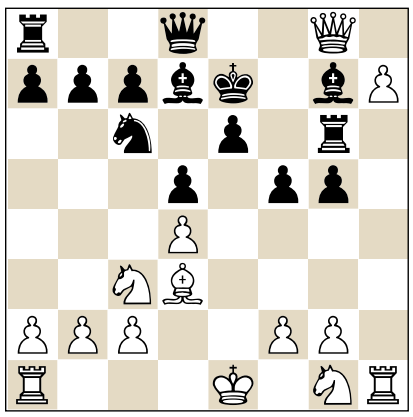
'Lasker commented on the collection of games from the international Chigorin Memorial (St. Petersburg, 1909). As was typical for the then World Champion, he would often provide just a general evaluation of the position, limiting himself to outlining the right game plan. Alekhine would then make the effort to carry out more extensive and fastidious analysis in order to either confirm or refute Lasker's conclusions.'

Iglitsky then demonstrates the opening moves of Forgacs-Spielmann:
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗b4 5.e5 h6 6.exf6 hxg5 7.fxg7 ♖g8 8.h4



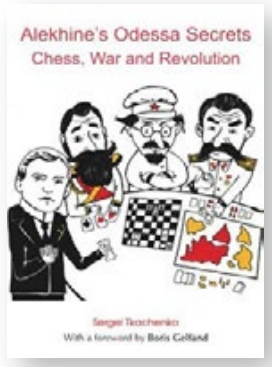
In the game Spielmann played 8...gxh4, but Lasker commented: 'It would have been simpler and more active to first play 8...♖xg7. If White then plays 9.♕h5, Black develops further with 9...♘c6.'
This is how Alekhine continued it:
8...♖xg7 9.♕h5 ♘c6 10.♕h8+ ♗f8

11.h5 ♗d7 12.h6 ♖g6 13.h7 ♔e7 14.♗d3 f5 15.♕g8 ♗g7

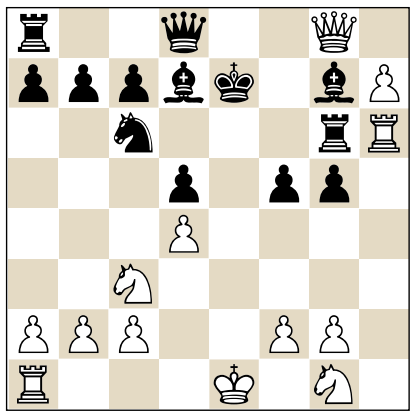


Iglitsky comments that 'it looks at first glance that Black has demonstrated White's entire manoeuvre to be unsound. However, Alekhine demonstrated a deeply hidden resource that decisively strengthens White's position.'

Alekhine's Odessa Secrets
by Sergei Tkachenko
Elk and Ruby, 2018
★★★★★



16.♗xf5 exf5 17.♖h6



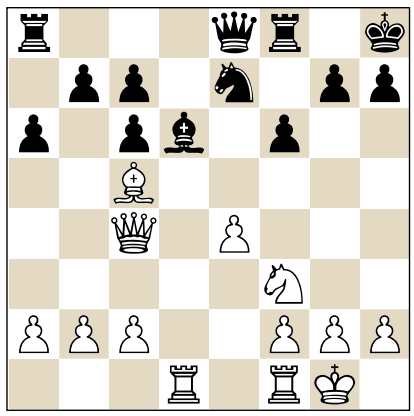
Wow!!
17...♗xh6 17...♕xg8 18.hxg8♕ ♖xg8 19.♖xg6 ♔f7 20.♖xg5 ♘xd4 is more resilient as Iglitsky points out.
18.♕xg6 ♕f8 19.♘xd5+ ♔d8 20.♕g8 and queening is inevitable.

However, the meat of the book is the extraordinary amount of work that Tkachenko has put into bringing together so many sources from that time to shed fresh light on such topics as Alekhine's officer's uniform and decorations, the time he spent in a Cheka jail in 1919, his subsequent employment in the Foreign Department of the Odessa Gubernia Executive Committee, and his various marriages. At times the book reads like a spy novel, and you wonder how Alekhine could have endured all this and still become World Champion just seven years later. It's a wonderful, beautifully produced book illustrated with many photos and facsimiles of original documents. A treat for anyone interested in Alekhine's life and times and the Odessan players with which he spent so much time in 1918 and 1919.

■ ■ ■

The Correct Exchange in the Endgame by Eduardas Rozentalis is another Thinkers Press title. I still remember Rozentalis's fantastic ability to win technical games from my professional days, so if anyone should be able to write a book like that, then he should! The book starts appropriately with a typical Rozentalis win in the Exchange Lopez: the sort of game that makes you think 4.♗xc6 is a win for White. Funnily enough, Sergey Kasparov dedicates a whole chapter to this variation in *Doubled Pawns – A Practical Guide* so I was getting a severe case of *déjà vu* while playing through this! I won't put any comments to the game, just the diagrams before the crucial exchanges, and you can guess whether Black took the right decision or not!

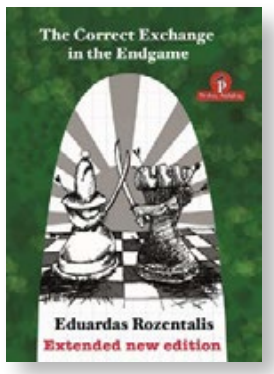
Eduardas Rozentalis
Tom Wedberg
New York 1997
Ruy Lopez, Exchange Variation
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.0-0 ♗d6 6.d4 exd4 7.♕xd4 f6 8.♗e3 ♘e7 9.♘bd2 ♗e6 10.♕c3 0-0 11.♘c4 ♗xc4 12.♕xc4+ ♔h8 13.♖ad1 ♕e8 14.♗c5

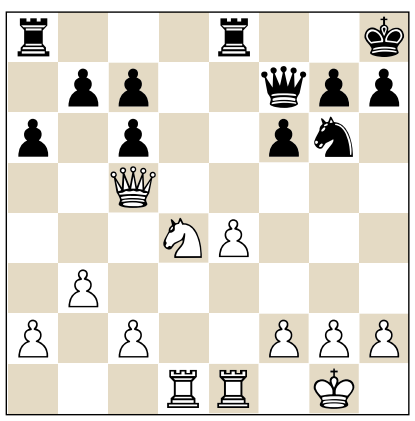


14...♗xc5 15.♕xc5 ♘g6 16.♖fe1 ♕f7 17.b3 ♖fe8 18.♘d4

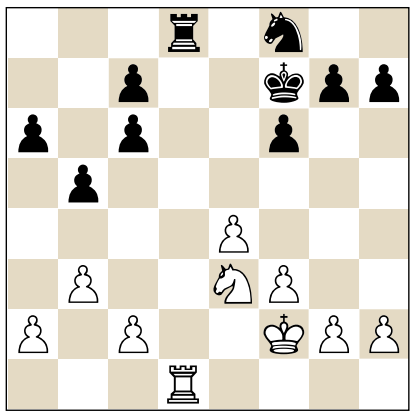
'You wonder how Alekhine could have endured all this and still become World Champion just seven years later.'

The Correct Exchange in the Endgame
by Eduardas Rozentalis
Thinkers Press, 2018
★★★★☆





18...♕f8 19.♕xf8+ ♘xf8 20.f3 ♖ad8 21.♔f2 ♔g8 22.♘f5 ♔f7 23.♘e3 b5 24.♖xd8 ♖xd8 25.♖d1



25...♖xd1 26.♘xd1 c5 27.♔e3 ♔e6 28.f4 ♘d7 29.♘b2 ♔d6 30.g3 ♔e6 31.♘d3 ♔d6 32.g4 c4 33.bxc4 bxc4 34.♘b4 c6 35.a3 a5 36.♘a2 ♘b6 37.♘c3 c5 38.h4 ♔e6 39.♘b5 ♔d7 40.g5 ♔e6 41.gxf6 gxf6 42.♘c3 ♘d7 43.♘d5 ♔f7 44.♔f3 ♔g6 45.♔g4 h5+ 46.♔f3 ♔f7 47.♔e3 ♔e6 48.f5+ ♔f7 49.♘f4 ♘e5 50.c3 ♔e7 51.♘xh5 ♘d3 52.♘f4 ♘e1 53.a4 1-0.

It's the type of game that you might just whizz through in ChessBase and not pay much attention to, but Rozentalis' comments are very instructive, both in highlighting the crucial moments in the game and the mistakes made, but also the skills involved in realising such an advantage. For example, after move 35.a3 he comments: 'Such endgames usually do not require long calculations, just two or three precise moves ahead should do the job', which is definitely some advice I will try to remember!

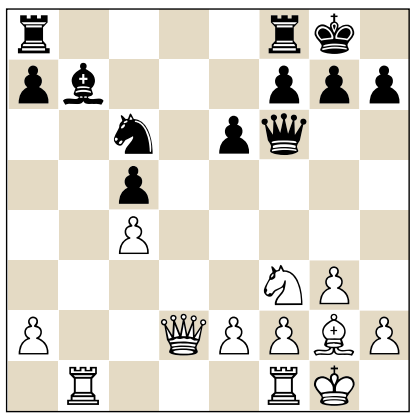
After this first complete game, Rozentalis examines the problem of exchanging pieces from various angles in four short chapters, each with six exercises to test the lessons learnt. Yet another excellent complete game takes up Chapter 6 and then you get a final test with 35 exercises to solve. After some solving, I was exchanging pieces along with the best of them, which isn't necessarily my natural style! A good, improving book!

■ ■ ■

The New In Chess Book of Chess Improvement, compiled and edited by Steve Giddins and published not surprisingly by New In Chess is a dive into the treasure trove of 33 years of New In Chess Magazine. If you are reading this article, then I hope you'll agree that right from the beginning, New In Chess has been blessed with great players writing wonderful annotations. This book is an extremely successful attempt to turn these great insights into a complete chess masterclass covering all aspects of the game: attack, defence, pawn structures and endgames, to name but a few. How many books could present games annotated in depth by eight World Champions and a series of other great players? Much of the material is familiar – but well worth revisiting – but Steve Giddins has also done a good job unearthing some less obvious gems. I particularly enjoyed playing through the game Andersson-Nikolic from the 1984 Thessaloniki Olympiad, expertly annotated by Tom Wedberg.

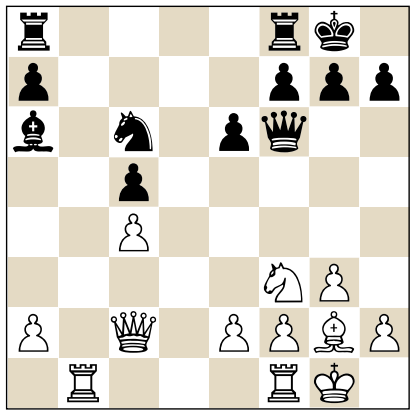
Ulf Andersson
Predrag Nikolic
Thessaloniki 1984
Queen's Indian Defence

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 ♗b7 4.♗g2 e6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d4 0-0 7.♘c3 ♘e4 8.♕c2 ♘xc3 9.♕xc3 c5 10.b3 ♗f6 11.♗b2 ♘c6 12.♕d2 d5 13.dxc5 dxc4 14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.bxc4 bxc5 16.♖ab1



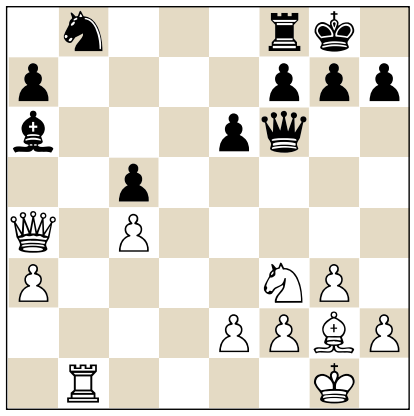
The opening is over and it is pretty obvious that Black's game is in a poor state. With his last move, White not only attacks the bishop but also threatens to win the pawn on c5 by means of ♖b5 and ♕e3.

16...♗a6 17.♕c2



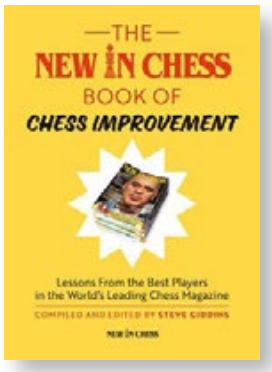
The first of a series of quiet queen moves of the stalking kind that Karpov excels in.

17...♘b4 18.♕b3 ♖ab8 19.a3 ♘c6 20.♕a4 ♖xb1 21.♖xb1 ♘b8



Black's premature attack has been thwarted in the most humiliating

The New in Chess Book of Chess Improvement by Steve Giddins
New in Chess, 2018
★★★★★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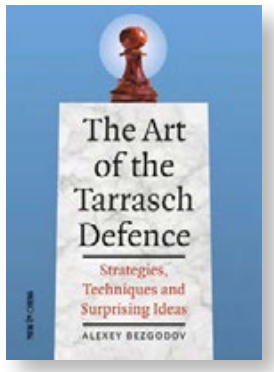
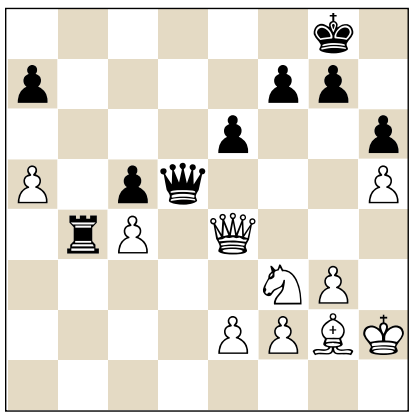
NEW IN CHESS
BOOK OF
CHESS IMPROVEMENT
Lessons From the Best Players in the World's Leading Chess Magazine
COMPILED AND EDITED BY STEVE GIDDINS

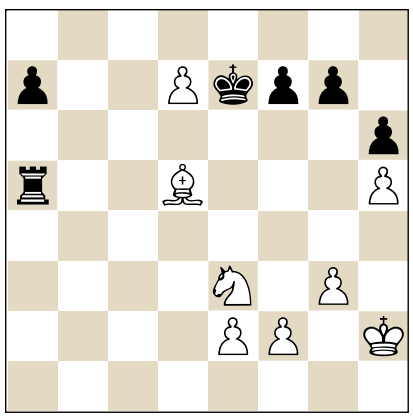
The Art of the Tarrasch Defence by Alexey Bezgodov
New In Chess, 2018
★★★★☆



fashion. In fact, the black knight and bishop are stuck on their uncomfortable squares. Therefore White first improves his kingside before cashing in.
22.h4 ♕e7 23.♖xb8 ♖xb8 24.♕xa6 ♕c7 25.♕a4 h6 26.h5 ♔f8 27.♕c2 ♔g8 28.♔h2 ♕d6 29.♕e4 ♖b3 30.a4 ♖b4 31.a5 ♕d5



Forces the exchange of queens, after which White's attacking chances disappear and Black can hope for counterplay in the ending with rook and passed pawn far removed from the white king on h2.
32.♕xd5 exd5 33.cxd5 c4 34.d6 ♔f8 35.d7 ♔e7 36.♘e5 ♖b5 37.♘xc4 ♖c5 38.♘e3 ♖xa5 39.♗d5

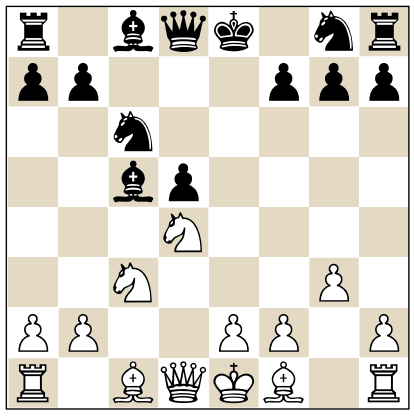


A difficult decision, especially under time pressure since it seems natural to keep the pawn on d7. However, 39.♗h3 proves erroneous after the strong reply 39...♖c5, which blocks the knight and clears the way for the a-pawn.
39...f6 After this White wins quite easily. The critical line is 39...♖b5 40.♗xf7 ♔xd7 41.♔g2 a5 42.♔f3 a4 43.♔e4 and now White has produced the double threat of either stopping the a-pawn or winning the one on g7. Black has two possibilities: 43...♔e7, saving his kingside pawns 44.♗c4 ♖b2 45.♔d3 a3 46.♔c3 and Black is stopped, or 43...a3 44.♘f5 ♖b2 45.♔f3 a2 46.♗xa2 ♖xa2 47.♘xg7 and White should win with knight and four pawns against rook and pawn, especially since h6 is weak.
40.♔g2 ♔xd7 41.♔f3 ♖b5 42.♔e4 a5 43.g4 White has time to construct a self-protecting pawn chain on the kingside.
43...a4 44.♗c4 ♖b1 45.f3 ♔c6 46.♔d4 ♖c1 47.♗f7 a3 48.♔d3 ♔c5 49.♘c2 Time to harvest. Black plays on for a couple of moves, but his resistance is broken.
49...♖d1+ 50.♔c3 ♖d7 51.♗a2 ♖e7 52.e3 ♖a7 53.♔b3 ♖d7 54.♔xa3 ♖d2 55.♔b3 1-0.

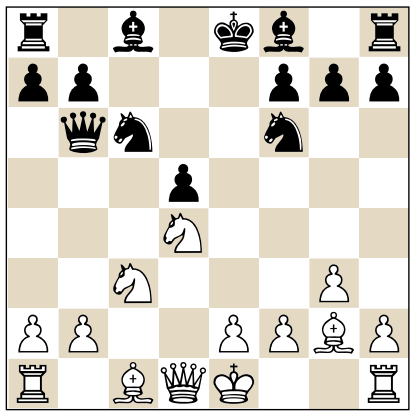
Masses of instruction in a beautifully-produced book. Warmly recommended!

■ ■ ■

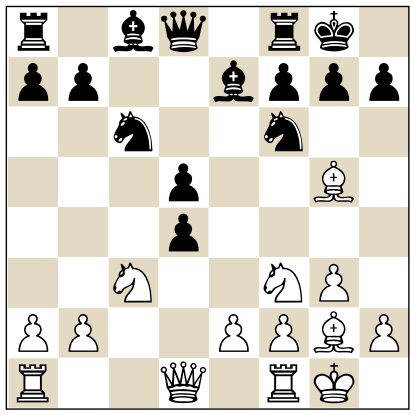
Finally I also managed to squeeze in a read of Alexey Bezgodov's *The Art of the Tarrasch Defence* (New In Chess). It's a slightly unusual opening book, perhaps best comparable to Victor Moskalenko's approach. The book starts off with a presentation of four lesser-known or even ignored ideas in the main line Tarrasch Defence such as the Curt von Bardeleben system: **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.g3 cxd4 7.♘xd4 ♗c5**



Or the Salwe system: **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.g3 ♘f6 7.♗g2 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♕b6**



The book then goes further with presenting material on all the side-lines and Bezgodov's own favoured choice in the main line: **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.g3 ♘f6 7.♗g2 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♗g5 cxd4**



The book ends with a series of chapters in which great players play and fight against the Tarrasch, and then rounds off with a chapter of 96 exercises taken from Tarrasch Defence games. It's a good summary of the opening with some extra unusual ideas thrown into the mix to give the reader some extra unpredictability. Recommended! ■

Hans Ree

An epiphany at the Lost Boys Open

Chess For Life, a book by Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan about the joys of playing chess at an advanced age, evoked a less cheerful memory in **HANS REE**.

I remember the moment when I felt that I couldn't play chess anymore. It was in 2001, after a loss in the first round of the Lost Boys Open in Amsterdam. I'm not sure why I was so upset then. True, my opponent had, as I see in retrospect, 140 rating points less than me and, what's more, he had played the Dutch Defence, which I had always considered an inferior opening. But that shouldn't be enough reason for the loss to have such an impact.

Tigran Petrosian liked to play against the Dutch and seems to have said that if he would play the dreaded opening himself – which he occasionally did – then for the rest of the game he would always be thinking about the desirable move ...f5-f7 to repair the pawn chain.

I shared Petrosian's low opinion of the Dutch, and in fact I have an excellent score against it, but then in 2001, I lost against it as White. So what? Such things happen, don't they?

When I try to reconstruct my feelings after that game, it seems to me that I had the idea that something incomprehensible had happened and that during the final stage I no longer had any idea what was going on. Almost like in a recurring dream I have. In the dream, I am playing chess and suddenly I see that my position has completely changed for the worse, without me having the faintest notion of what has been going on. I take such dreams as an intimation of the dangers that lie in wait for older chess players or senior citizens in general.

About the vagaries of memory. I remembered the tournament, the location, the Dutch Opening and the variation that I chose to combat it. I thought I remembered a chaotic time-scramble, and over the years I had become convinced that my opponent had been the Russian GM Evgeny Gleizerov. When I consulted the database, crutch of my failing memory recently, I found that Gleizerov didn't even take part in that Lost Boys Open and that in fact my opponent had been the Austrian FM Andreas Bachofner. And the time-scramble, if it had occurred at all, can't have been terribly exciting, since I see now, with help of the engine, that I had already been lost at move 24.

On the road with Euwe and Withuis

There is a beautiful Dutch film from 1995 called *Lang Leve de Koningin* (Long Live the Queen), written and directed by Esmé Lammers, who is a granddaughter of Max Euwe. There is a scene in which IM Hans Böhm, playing himself as a commentator at an international tournament, welcomes a participant who has just lost his game. 'You were badly outplayed, weren't you?' says Böhm, and of course he gets the typical answer: 'Outplayed? No, I wouldn't say that. But I made an unnecessary error and after that it was hopeless.'

An unnecessary error, always. Esmé Lammers had a good ear for chess players' evasions. I wonder if she ever heard the expression from her grandfather. In an interview she once said that as a young student she had a part-time job as Euwe's chauffeur, often driving him on trips through Europe for chess matters. She had been amazed by his fantastic memory. 'Now at the third crossing from here you'll have to take a left', he would say, somewhere in Austria on a highway on which he had been 10 years earlier.

By the way, the organizer and chess journalist Berry Withuis, about whom I wrote in New In Chess 2017/4, used to drive chess masters and grandmasters all over the Neth-

erlands to the simul displays that he had organized, and once told me that he always regarded other road users as dangerous enemies who could attack at any moment, either by foul intent or by a stroke of madness. He would be prepared.

Recently, his daughter Jolande Withuis wrote a book about how it was to grow up as a child in a Communist family during the Cold War. One of the lessons she learned from her father at a young age: 'In a café, always sit with your face to the entrance and be aware of a second exit. You'll see who comes in and you'll be able to get out so that they won't shoot you unexpectedly in the back.' That was because of his World War II experiences. Maybe his attitude to other cars on the road stemmed from the same source. Anyway, on our way to the simuls we felt safe in his car.

Two captains on a river

About unnecessary errors, some philosophically inclined people might hold the view that such things do not exist and that every event proves its own necessity by the mere fact that it has happened. That may be a legitimate way to think, but not a way to live. I used to be able to persuade myself, at least at intervals, that my errors in chess had in principle been avoidable. If I could just think in the right way, I would find the right move and would not lose.

This wasn't really arrogance, because I was well aware of the difference between the great players and me. It was more a simplistic and very much 'pre-computer' idea about the nature of chess. If you only thought right, you wouldn't lose.

When I was one of Viktor Kortchnoi's seconds for his Candidates matches against Petrosian in 1977 and against Portisch in 1983, I was impressed by his optimistic attitude that basically all problems in chess could be solved by hard work. I think I owe a lot to my work with Viktor, not so much because of the technical results of our work in opening variations, but because of his inspiring attitude.

The late lamented Dutch grandmaster Hein Donner showed the opposite attitude in an article about his son, who was doing homework for his elementary school. Hein gave him an extra exercise that started conventionally with a ship going up a river at a certain speed, but ended with the absurd question: how old is the captain's wife?

The boy calculated frantically, could not find a solution and understandably became very angry when his father told him that the whole point of this exercise had been to show that some problems are not solvable, because of a lack of relevant information. You might call it Donner's version of the logician Kurt Gödel's famous Incompleteness Theorem, adapted to the level of a child.

'A schoolmaster in Nanchong had put almost the same question in an exam for 11-year-old pupils: "A ship has 26 sheep and 10 goats on board. What is the age of the captain?" '

Donner may have been ahead of his time, for recently I read in a BBC report that a schoolmaster in the Chinese city of Nanchong had put almost the same question in an exam for 11-year-old pupils: 'A ship has 26 sheep and 10 goats on board. What is the age of the captain?'

As it would be in the West, Chinese internet reactions were scathing. What was the age of the schoolmaster, people wondered. Was he senile? But just like Donner, this schoolmaster had been quite shrewd. He had wanted to stimulate non-exact creative thinking, and indeed some of the answers he got were quite ingenious.

Losing as a wake-up call

Reluctantly I have to return now to the game I mentioned at the start of this article.

I am writing this during the Candidates tournament in Berlin. At the press conference after Round 2, Levon Aronian said: 'Generally, when you make big blunders, it's kind of a medicine. Because it wakes you up. At some point, we all think we're very clever and we're invincible and then you play a very bad game and you understand that there is a lot to improve, a lot of area to work on.'

And Alexander Grischuk said: 'Losing is always very inspiring.'

This is an uplifting attitude. These players are not only marvellously gifted, they are also still young and resilient, even though it must be said that Aronian played far below his normal strength against Kramnik the next day.

Not to compare myself to the gods, but I must say that in my case the epiphany of 2001, with its sudden and striking realization that I couldn't play chess anymore, has never left me since.

So be it. At least, writing about it has steered my mind to other, more pleasant memories.

This article was originally intended to start out as an introduction to a few things I wanted to say about a book I had read recently, *Chess for Life* by Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan (Gambit Publications 2016). As you can see, my would-be introductory part has expanded vastly at the cost of the intended main subject, leaving just enough space to heartily recommend this interesting book. ■

Jan Timman

And another victory for Vishy Anand

After he lost the world title in 2013, many predicted the end of Vishy Anand's career. These experts must feel pretty silly now, as five years on, at 48, the 'Tiger of Madras' continues to roar and bite. **JAN TIMMAN** looks at his impressive showing in the rapid part of the Tal Memorial in Moscow.

In 1991, Vishy Anand faced a crucial trial in his young career. In the quarter-finals of the Candidates matches in Brussels the Indian super-talent, 20 years old at the time, was to play Karpov. Earlier that year, he had defeated the former World Champion with Black in Linares, yet most experts were of the opinion that he wouldn't have a hope in hell. But the match went all the way to the wire, with Karpov only managing to clinch victory in the final game. With this performance, Anand staked an indisputable claim for a place in the world top, but not everyone agreed. 'Just tricks,' was Kortchnoi's disdainful comment on the young Indian's play. Yes, tricks, I thought, but very deep tricks. During the final days of that year and the first days of 1992, Anand removed all doubts by beating Kasparov at the traditional New Year's tournament in Reggio Emilia and winning the tournament.

Anand had more than just an enormous talent for the game. In the recent documentary about Magnus Carlsen, Frederic Friedel of ChessBase emphasizes the phenomenal way in which Anand had familiarized himself with the technological developments of that time. That combination of talent and exemplary preparation guaranteed that he would have a long and brilliant career.

If a World Champion – or another top player – continues to play after 40, there are bound to be short periods of apparent decline. When this happens, hordes of sour critics come out of the woodwork claiming that his career is finished. This happened to Anand after his first match against Carlsen in Chennai in 2013. Some people observed somewhat sneeringly that he would be better off withdrawing from the next Candidates tournament. Anand gave them the most convincing reply possible: by winning the Candidates.

Last year, he failed to qualify for the Candidates tournament in Berlin at the World Cup in Tbilisi. This time, all the critics agreed: this was the end of the Anand era. But again the Indian confounded his critics with his resilience: not long afterwards, he won the Rapid World Championship, 25 years after his victory in Reggio Emilia. No, there isn't any sign foreshadowing the end of an era. Anand has been at the top for more than a quarter of a century. In Wijk aan Zee that combination of talent and exemplary preparation could be seen at work again. He confronted Gawain Jones in the latter's pet line of the Sicilian and inflicted an impressive defeat.

'No, there isn't any sign foreshadowing the end of an era. Anand has been at a top for more than a quarter of a century.'

It came as no surprise that in his next event, the Tal Memorial in Moscow, Anand won the rapid part, romping

MARIA EMELIANOVA

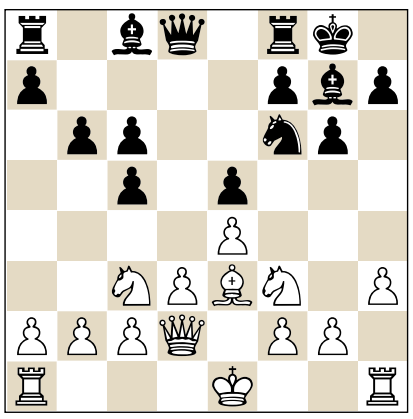
The Tal Memorial rapid cast photographed at the general prize-giving in the Museum of Russian Impressionism: Anand, Dubov, Gelfand, Nepomniachtchi, Grischuk, Karjakin (winner of the blitz), Kramnik, Nakamura, Svidler and Mamedyarov. Barely visible between Dubov and Gelfand, the man who made the event possible, Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich.

through the tournament with playful ease. His most spectacular win he achieved against Grischuk and he kindly agreed to annotate that game for our magazine.

NOTES BY
Vishy Anand

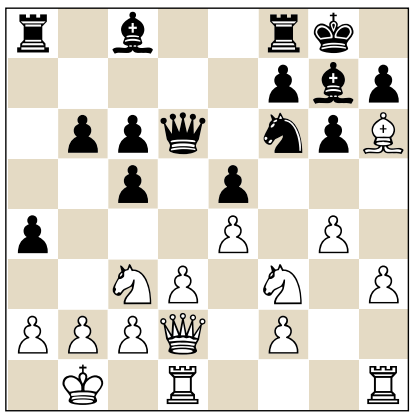
Vishy Anand
Alexander Grischuk
Moscow rapid 2018 (8)
Sicilian Defence, Rossolimo Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 g6 4.♗xc6 dxc6 5.d3 ♗g7 6.h3 ♘f6 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♗e3 b6 9.♕d2 e5



This line was incredibly popular more than a decade back. I remember that especially around 2002 this was a topical line. However, fashion has moved on and it was almost a surprise to see it again. In the first round against Dubov I had faced the more topical line of 4...bxc6 and 6...♘h6 (White won after 35 moves, see page 103 – ed.).

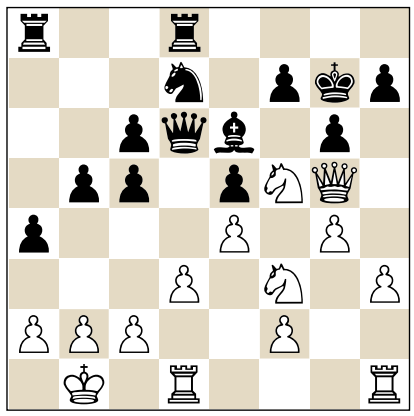
10.♗h6 ♕d6 11.0-0-0 a5 12.g4 a4 13.♔b1



13...♗e6

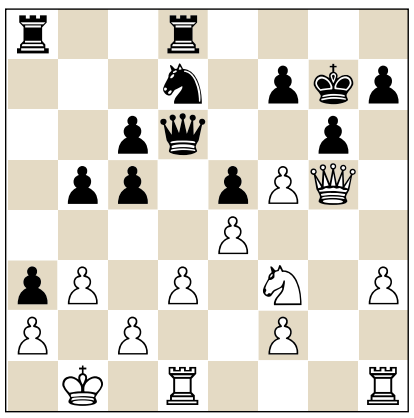
Black could have played 13...♘e8 here, and the plan is quite simple: coming to e6, which is a really nice square, either via c7 or after recapturing on g7. I didn't feel the bishop belonged on e6, but as with many lines that haven't been played in a while, one tends to forget all the finesses.

14.♘e2 b5 15.♘g3 ♖fd8 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7 17.♕g5 ♘d7 18.♘f5+



This plan, started with 17.♕g5, is a fairly positional idea. One, it gets rid of the black bishop (there are some lines in which Black can play, for instance, ...b4 and ...♗xa2+, which is now taken out of the picture) and obviously it is helpful to open the g-file. I felt fairly confident at this stage, because I thought I could put a lot of pressure on the black kingside, whereas his counterplay on the queenside is much slower.

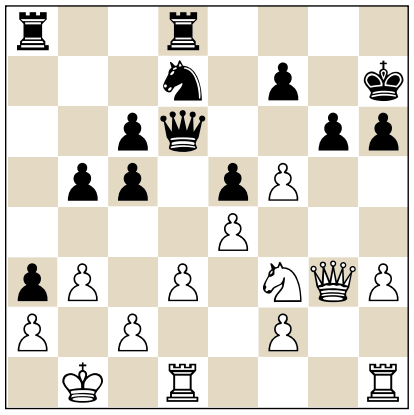
18...♗xf5 19.gxf5 a3 20.b3



20...h6

Grischuk prefers to keep his king on h7 and bring his rook to g8, which is quite a reasonable defensive plan. He could also have considered shifting his rook into another direction. Something like 20...♖g8, perhaps followed by ...♕f6. And even ...♔f8 and ...♔e7 might have been a good defensive plan.

21.♕g3 ♔h7

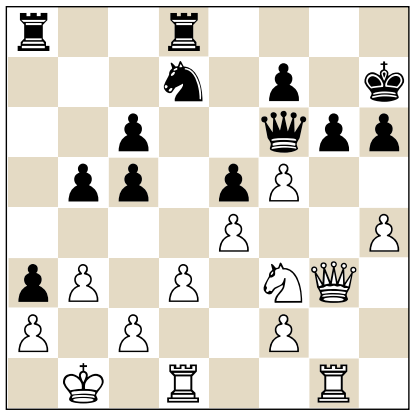


22.♖hg1

The eternal question of which rook. The advantage of 22.♖dg1 is that I have a rook ready on the h-file when I go h4, ♘g5+. The disadvantage of 22.♖dg1 is that the rook would no longer 'attack' the black queen, so Black could play ...c4 more effectively. The problem with 22.h4 gxf5 23.♘g5+ is that, as you can see, after 23...hxg5 24.hxg5+ ♔g7 25.exf5 Black simply sidesteps the attack with 25...♖g8 and ...♔f8, and White is a piece down.

22...♕f6 23.h4?!

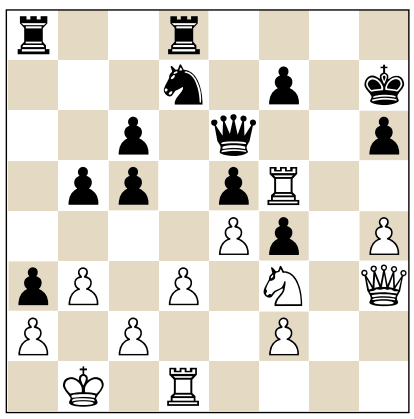
At this point I had about five minutes left, and needless to say, Grischuk had far less than that. I felt my position was quite promising, so I tried to look for some good move. In fact, the evaluation right now seems to be about equal. I finally came up with this idea of lifting the rook to g5 and f5, which seemed to be dangerous, so I charged forth with my h-pawn.



23...gxf5 24.♕h3 f4 25.♖g5?

This is a real mistake, because after this Black is better. If I had played 25.♔c1!, it would not have been easy to see how Black can improve his position. He cannot take over the g-file, because the rook on d8 is defending the knight on d7. Nor can the black knight move easily in view of ♖g5. And if ...♕e6, we exchange queens and White has enough compensation for the pawn because of Black's pawn weaknesses.

25...♕e6 26.♖f5



This was my big point, because I felt that the rook was very uncomfortable for Black over there and that some combination of ♖h1, ♘g5+ and ♕g4 would work. It seems that I misjudged the position. Part of the problem could be that it's very easy to keep considering the move ...♖g8 not only as Grischuk played, but also in the variation after 26...f6 below. It's very easy for Black to play ...♖g8, as it's a very natural move to make: you want to bring the rook to g6 or g7 and create a defensive set-up. This may unduly have made 26.♖f5 seem stronger than it was. As I will show below, more than one alternative to the mistake he made seems to be working quite nicely for Black. White obviously has compensation, because the rook on f5, while it is not going to take a huge part in the game, is still a very dangerous piece and is going to tie down a few black pieces. White is not without compensation, but it is insufficient. So my gamble was a lucky one that paid off.

26...♖g8??

Grischuk played this fairly confidently. The problem is that it is the move the hand almost wants you to make, which I had noticed as well, because it was the move that kept popping up. But once you see the right idea for White, you eventually work out by elimination 26...f6 and 26...♔h8, both of which Sasha suggested right after the game. Even in the post-mortem, it was not easy to get away from the idea that White had compensation, but of course the computer defends it extremely easily.

To begin with, Black would have been better after 26...f6 27.♘g5+ (or 27.♖h1 ♔h8 28.♘g5 ♕e7 29.♕g4 ♖g8 30.♕h5 ♔g7 31.♖g1 hxg5 32.hxg5 ♔f8, and Black wins) 27...fxg5 28.hxg5, and should win after 28...♕g6 (here, again, 28...♖g8 is a blunder: 29.♖f7+!) 29.♖h1 h5.

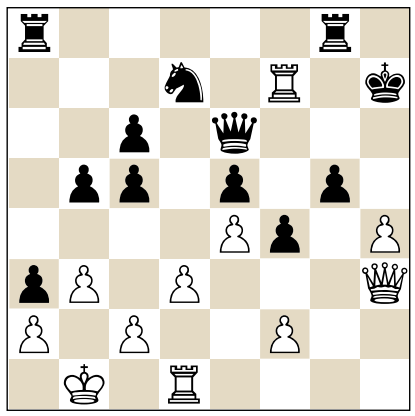
But after 26...♔h8 Black will also have the upper hand.

Now I could immediately execute the move I had prepared, because I could see that he had blundered.

27.♘g5+ hxg5 28.♖xf7+!

It was only here that it hit him what had happened. He sat for a while, trying to come to terms with a game that only seconds ago he must have been confident about. It took him some time to absorb it, but then he

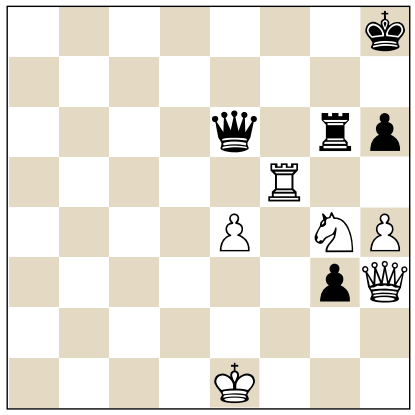
very sportingly decided to let the spectators see the mate.



28...♕xf7 29.hxg5+ ♔g7 30.♕h6 Mate.

■ ■ ■

This brilliant win by Anand met with wide acclaim and the final phase inspired the German study composer Martin Minski to create the following study.



Minski, Chess Star 2018
White to play and win
(dedicated to Vishy Anand)

It goes as follows:
1.♘e5! ♖g8 2.♘f7+ ♔h7 3.♘g5+! hxg5 4.♖f7+! ♕xf7 5.hxg5+ ♔g7 6.♕h6 Mate.

'Mate with two self-blocks' this is called in study jargon. What it means is that, in the main line, the black rook and queen have been lured to squares that the king will no longer be able to access. The study is, in fact, a stylized version of the final part of the game.

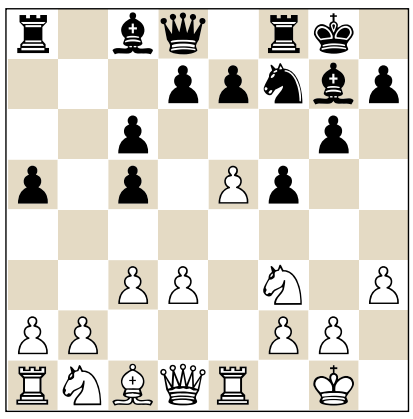
Anand also played a good game against Dubov.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

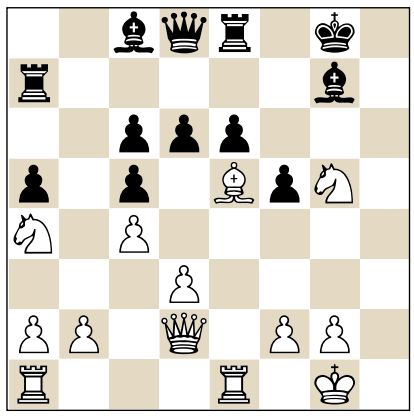
In Moscow, the city where he was born and lives, Daniil Dubov (21) continued to impress with his original and creative play.

Vishy Anand
Daniil Dubov
Moscow rapid 2018 (1)
Sicilian Defence, Rossolimo Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 g6 4.♗xc6 bxc6 5.0-0 ♗g7 6.♖e1 ♘h6 7.c3 0-0 8.h3 f5 9.e5 ♘f7 10.d3
The alternative is 10.d4, but the more restrained text-move is more common. Black has a wide choice. Gelfand, the great expert of this system, usually goes 10...d6, but also plays 10...♖b8 on occasion. Another possibility is 10...♗a6, which Dubov himself has played as well.
10...a5 A new move.



11.♗f4 e6 12.♕d2 h6 13.h4 ♖e8 14.c4 d6 15.♘c3 ♖a7
Dubov now adopts an interesting strategy – waging an indirect war in the centre. White cannot provide the pawn with extra cover, and when the moment suits, Black will play ...g6-g5 to blow up the white centre.
16.♘a4 g5! The right moment.
17.hxg5 hxg5 18.♘xg5 The alternative was 18.♗xg5, intending to sacrifice an exchange: 18...♘xg5 19.♕xg5 ♕xg5 20.♘xg5 ♗xe5 21.♖xe5! dxe5 22.♖e1. After this, Black just manages to maintain the balance with 22...♖g7 23.♘f3 e4.
18...♘xe5 19.♗xe5



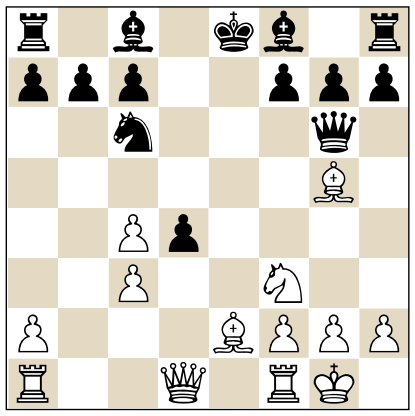
19...dxe5? Scuppering the whole idea. Black should have played 19...♗xe5 to keep his structure intact. White can still make a positional sacrifice, but not a very convincing one.
20.♘f3! After this accurate move Anand converts his advantage in exemplary fashion.
20...♗f6 21.♘xe5 ♖h7 22.♕f4 ♗g5 23.♕g3 ♖g7 24.♕f3 ♕d6

25.♖e2 ♗f6 26.♖ae1 ♖g5 27.♕e3 f4 28.♕xf4 ♖f8 29.♖e3 ♖f7 30.♖g3 ♖xg3 31.♕xg3+ ♖g7 32.♕e3 ♖g5 33.♘f3 ♖f5 34.♘c3 ♗d4 35.♘e4 Black resigned.

Dubov had more interesting ideas in the opening. Against Nakamura he uncorked a sharp variation that was especially suited to rapid games.

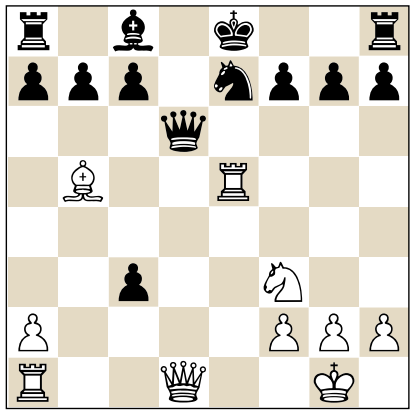
Daniil Dubov
Hikaru Nakamura
Moscow rapid 2018 (2)
English Opening, Mikenas Attack

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.e4 d5 4.e5 d4 5.exf6 dxc3 6.bxc3 ♕xf6 7.d4 e5 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♗e2 The usual reply is 9.♗g5. **9...exd4 10.♗g5 ♕g6 11.0-0**



And this is new. White sacrifices two pawns in order to create attacking chances.

11...dxc3 12.♗d3 ♕d6 13.♖e1+ ♗e7 14.c5!? Sacrificing another pawn! **14...♕xc5 15.♗xe7 ♘xe7 16.♖e5 ♕d6 17.♗b5+**



The first point of the pawn sacs: it is no longer safe for Black to castle.

17...♔f8 18.♕e2 f6 19.♖d1 fxe5 20.♘xe5

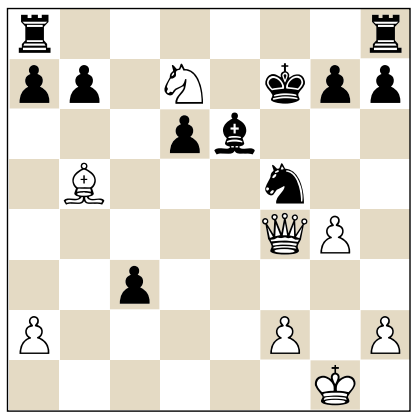
Dubov was still playing *a tempo*. Black is a rook and two pawns ahead, but is now forced to give his queen.

20...♗f5

Nakamura has defended excellently so far, but it has cost him a lot of time. The text is not bad in itself, but now Black will be forced to defend extremely accurately. In a classical game, Nakamura would probably have played 20...c2!, when after 21.♖xd6 cxd6 22.♘d3 ♗f5 23.♕xc2 a6 he would have no problems at all.

21.♖xd6 cxd6 22.♘d7+ ♔f7 23.♕c4+ ♗e6 24.♕f4+ ♘f5 25.g4

Dubov was still playing fast. Black must be wary now.



25...♖ad8? The decisive error. Black should still have played 25...c2. Things will look hairy after 26.gxf5 ♗xa2 27.f6, but now both 27...♖hc8 and 27...g5 are sufficient to hold.

26.gxf5 ♗xd7 27.♗c4+

27.♕c4+ would also have won, but

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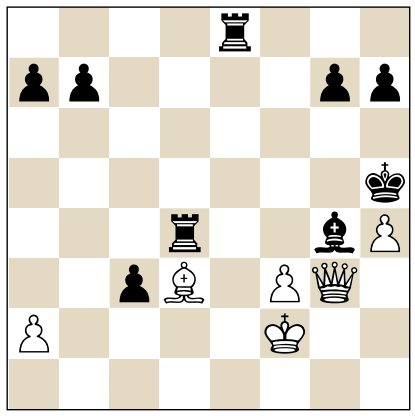
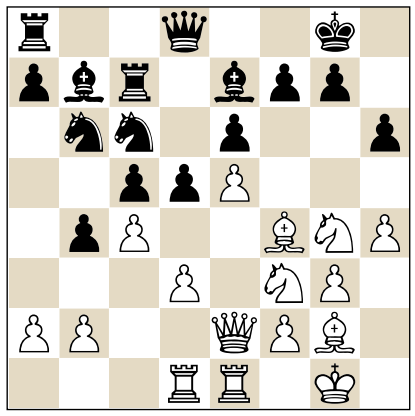
Dubov has sharply calculated the final phase.
27...d5 28.♗xd5+ ♔f6 29.♕d6+ ♔xf5 30.♗c4 ♖he8 31.♗d3+ ♔g5 32.h4+ ♔h5 33.♕g3 ♗g4 34.f3! Elegant. **34...♖d4 35.♔f2**



35...c2 Too late. Black could still have set a trap with 35...g5, with the point of 36.fxg4+? ♖xg4 37.♕f3 ♖f8! 38.♕xf8 ♖f4+, and a draw. But White would win with 36.♕c7!.
36.♗xc2 ♖f8
And Black resigned in view of 37.♕e5+.

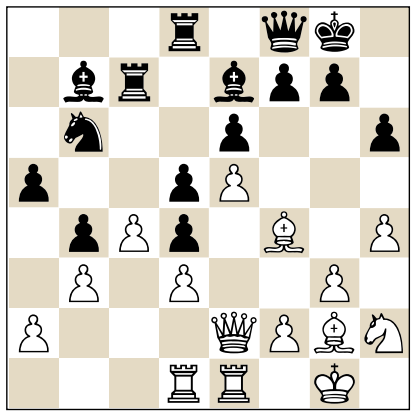
Kramnik had both ups and downs in the Tal Memorial. Something interesting happened in his game against Svidler.

Peter Svidler
Vladimir Kramnik
Moscow rapid 2018 (3)

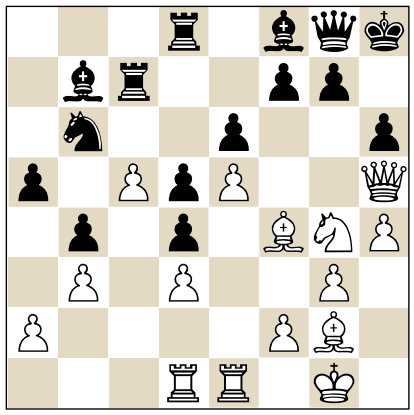


position after 18.♘g4

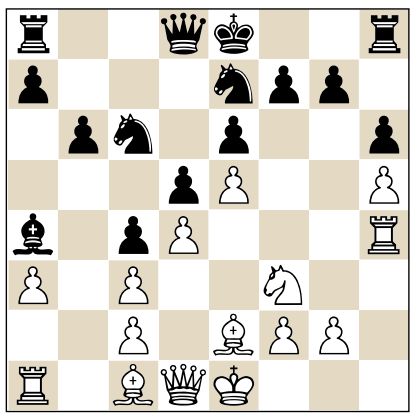
A typical position in the King's Indian Attack. White goes on the rampage, while Black has counterplay on the queenside. White has taken his knight to g4, meaning that a sacrifice is in the air.
18...♕f8 A preventive measure, but also the start of a remarkable manoeuvre.
19.♕e3 ♘d4 20.♘xd4 cxd4 21.♕e2 ♖d8 22.b3 a5 23.♘h2



White withdraws the knight in order to put his queen on h5. After that he wants to return the knight to g4.
23...♔h8 24.♕h5 ♕g8 Kramnik prepares to counter this plan with an ingenious queen manoeuvre. But it is tactically incorrect. Black could safely have played 24...a4, as after 25.♘g4 ♔h7 the White attack is no longer dangerous.
25.♘g4 Now Black's plan is validated. A strong reply would have been 25.♘f3, after which Black will find it hard to protect the d-pawn, his problem being that 25...♗c5 will fail to 26.♗xh6! gxh6 27.♕xh6+ ♕h7 28.♕f6+, and wins. The d8-rook is unprotected.
25...♗f8 Now the black king has found optimum security in a most curious manner. **26.c5** This is what Svidler had planned. After 26...♖xc5 27.♗xh6! gxh6 28.♘xh6 White will win, because the f-pawn – and again the d8-rook – are unprotected. But Black is not forced to take the c-pawn.



26...♘d7! Covering square f6. In the end, the c-pawn will fall anyway.
27.♘h2 ♘xc5 28.♕e2 ♗a6 29.♘f3 ♕h7 The triumph of the black strategy. The queen has been deployed in original fashion. Black is on top and won on move 44. Kramnik's queen manoeuvre reminded me of another game.



A.Sokolov-Jussupow
Riga Candidates match 1986 (1)
position after 13.♗e2

A position from the Winawer in the French Defence. Jussupow played **13...♔d7! 14.♗e3 ♕g8! 15.♕d2 ♕h7** and went on to win the game. A queen creeping back into the fray via h7: it's an amazing theme. ■

Moscow 2018 rapid — **cat. XXI**

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR
1	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2776	*	0	½	1	½	1	1	½	½	1	6	2884
2	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	AZE	2809	1	*	½	½	½	½	0	½	1	½	5	2798
3	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2763	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	5	2803
4	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2787	0	½	½	*	1	½	0	1	½	1	5	2801
5	Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2695	½	½	½	0	*	½	1	½	½	½	4½	2768
6	Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2767	0	½	½	½	½	*	½	1	½	½	4½	2760
7	Daniil Dubov	IGM	RUS	2701	0	1	½	1	0	½	*	0	½	½	4	2724
8	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2800	½	½	0	0	½	0	1	*	1	½	4	2713
9	Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2760	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	*	½	3½	2681
10	Ian Nepomniachtchi	IGM	RUS	2751	0	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	3½	2682

Just Checking

Lawrence Trent

CURRENT ELO: 2440

DATE OF BIRTH: April 28,1986

PLACE OF BIRTH: London, UK

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Berlin, Germany / London, UK

What is your favourite city?
Nothing beats London, although I absolutely adore Vienna.

What was the last great meal you had?
Milos in London, with the one and only IM Ali Mortazavi.

What drink brings a smile to your face?
Drinks bringing a smile to other people's faces.

Which book would you give to a dear friend?
How Much is Enough? by Edward Skidelsky.

What book is currently on your bedside table?
The Rise and Fall of David Bronstein by GM Genna Sosonko.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
The Godfather I.

And your favourite TV series?
The Sopranos.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Marlon Brando.

And a favourite actress?
Meryl Streep.

What music are you currently listening to?
1980s hip hop.

Is there a painting that moves you?
Liberty Leading the People by Eugène Delacroix.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Judit Polgar – Brilliant person and one of the most ferocious attacking players of all time.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
The Seven Deadly Chess Sins by Jonathan Rowson.

What was your best result ever?
Winning the Porto San Giorgio Open back to back 2005/06.

And the best game you played?
Steingrimsson-Trent, Andorra 2013.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Just choose one of the games from this year's Candidates! We were utterly spoilt.

What is your favourite square?
g7 – all my good sacrifices happen there.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
They'd all be useless on a desert island.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Plants vs Zombies. Maybe *Hearthstone*. Oh, and some can play poker.

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or?
Twitter!

How many friends do you have on Facebook?
Too many who aren't friends.

Who do you follow on Twitter?
A lot of very uninspiring people.

What is your life motto?
'The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.' – Mark Twain.

When were you happiest?
Playing football in the park around the age of 8.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
A worldy philosopher.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
Don't take life too seriously.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
The Drums.

Where is your favourite place in the world?
Granada, Spain.

What is your greatest fear?
Losing love through carelessness.

And your greatest regret?
If I die without getting my GM title, that will be it.

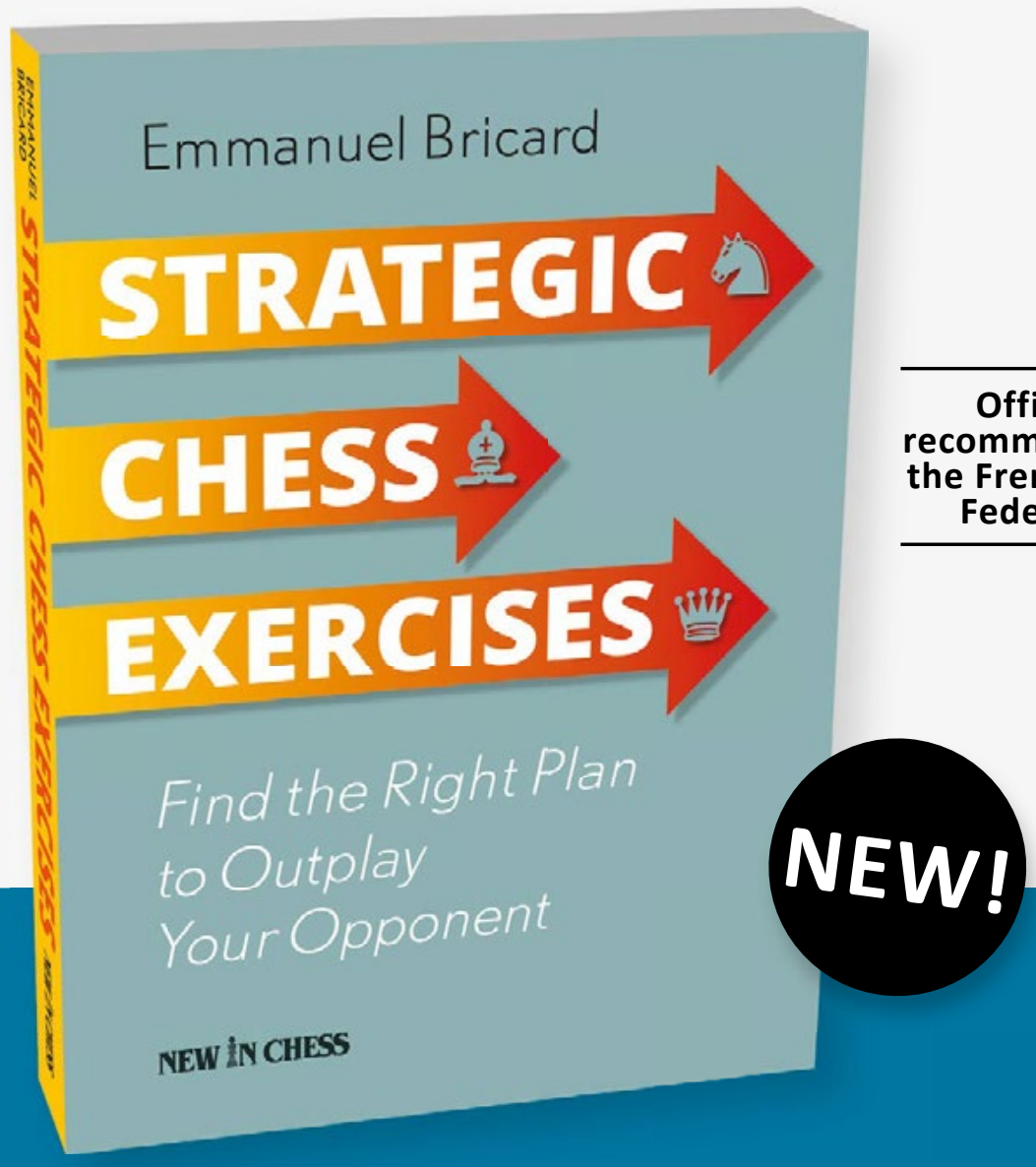
How do you relax?
Netflix!

What does it mean to be a chess player?
Unparalleled mental anguish.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
On a subconscious level, probably.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
'Chess is mental ***bation' – Bobby Fischer.

Spend less time on finding better plans



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